

A Study of Roy Campbell as a South African modernist poet

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Abstract

Roy Campbell was once a key figure in the South African literary canon. In recent years, his poetry has faded from view and only intermittent studies of his work have appeared. However, as the canon of South African literature is redefined, I argue it is fruitful to consider Campbell and his work in a different light. This thesis aims to re-read both the legend of the literary personality of Roy Campbell, and his prose and poetry written during the period of “high” modernism in England (the 1920s and 1930s), more closely in relation to modernist concerns about language, meaning, selfhood and community. It argues that his notorious, purportedly colonial, “hypermasculine” personae, and his poetic and personal explorations of “selfhood”, offer him a point of reference in a rapidly changing literary and social environment. Campbell lived between South Africa and England, and later Provence and Spain, and this displacement resonated with the modernist theme of “exile” as a necessary condition for the artist. I will suggest that, like the Oxford dandies whom he befriended, Campbell’s masculinist self-styling was a reaction against a particular set of patriarchal traditions, both English and colonial South African, to which he was the putative heir. His poetry reflects his interest in the theme of the “outsider” as belonging to a certain masculinist literary “tradition”. But he also transforms this theme in accordance with a “modernist” sensibility.

Keywords:

Roy Campbell

Wyndham Lewis

Voorslag

Modernism

South African literature

Mithraism

Spanish Civil War

Dandyism

Bullfighting

Poetry

Declaration

I declare that “A study of Roy Campbell as a South African modernist poet” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged and referenced in full.

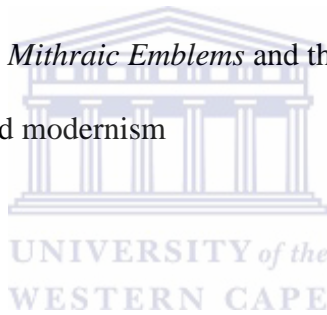
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Preface

In September 2003 I visited my sister Lexi at her home in Sella, a small mountainside village in Spain. Sella is a hot, dusty ancient village, set mid-way up a mountain of terraced farms. These are irrigated by aqueducts dating back to Moorish times, and produce almonds, figs, grapes, and olives; the classical fruits of the dry Mediterranean. The mountain water in Sella has become a valuable commodity, and on a Sunday afternoon, you could sit on the small retaining wall on the hairpin bend of the narrow mountain road, and watch city people from nearby Alicante filling large canteens of water from the public source at the ancient Lavado.

From Sella, it was a half hour drive to the coastal village of Altea. I had decided in that same year that my doctoral thesis would be on Roy Campbell, and it so happened that Altea was home to the Campbell family from 1934-1935. Lexi's friend Rosalina Barber, an historian, a native of Altea, and a person clearly loved by all who met her, took me on a research trip around the town. Rosalina spoke Catalan, the local dialect, and with my directions to the two Campbell abodes, drawn from Peter Alexander's biography, she strode up and down the dusty streets on the outskirts of the village, trying to match the contemporary place names to the historic ones. We spoke to a postman on a bicycle; to a man sweeping up the carob pods from his driveway, and to some of her family friends as we went by. I understood not a word, but stood back and watched.

We found the Fonda Ronda, a hotel which was temporary home to the Campbells on their arrival in Altea. Then we discovered that the district borders had been changed. Nonetheless, we located the first Campbell home – a small one roomed cottage semi-detached on both sides to three others, positioned immediately in front of a chalk mine dump. The woman who opened the door told us that her husband had worked on the mine, but had developed severe lung disease, and would spend the rest of his life on a ventilator. They had lived in the house since 1952, and had not heard of the Campbells. She directed us, however, to a house on the central square belonging to Pepita la Violina – a woman who had hosted many of the artists and writers who had come to Altea over the years.

Sadly, we never met Pepita. We walked over to her house, but no-one was at home. Strolling around the square, we looked over a low wall into a garden in which a group of people were chatting. Rosalina leant over the wall and enquired about Pepita. An elderly woman came over to speak to us. Rosalina explained our mission: to find out if anyone remembered a South African poet who had lived in Altea in the 1930s. "Ah Roy!" she exclaimed. "Y las dos hijas, Teresa y Anna. How are they?"

Paca la Zurda, in her mid-80s at the time we met her, had been the Campbell's maid as a girl of 15 in 1934. She had helped Mary do her hair in the mornings; she remembered Roy's favourite food – arroz amb frisolet (rice with beans). They had been the first foreigners in Altea, to her knowledge. She knew they had moved to Toledo from Altea, and she brought out a magazine with a well-known image of Roy on horseback at a festival. We chatted about the civil war in which her sweetheart, a Republican, had been killed. She remembered the Padre, Father Gregorio, who had confirmed the Campbells. Contrary to Peter Alexander, she claimed that he had not been killed by the Republicans, but had lived a long and good life. She, who had never left Altea, was shocked that I had come from so far away, and blessed me fervently for my return trip home.

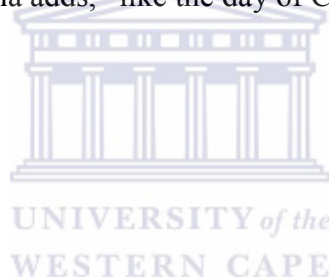
Paca's lucidity and warmth quickly transformed her, for me, into a figure at the heart of the Campbell family story. In that short hour's exchange, which I did not understand, and recorded badly in broken notes from Rosalina's intermittent translations, I imagined that I glimpsed the world as it was for the Campbells, in which time stops for a lingering conversation with a stranger.

I have been on the lookout for references to Paca la Zurda in the literature on Campbell's life, and finally found one in Anna Campbell Lyle's memoir of her father, *Poetic Justice*, first published in 1986:

In summer the Norwegian playwright, Helge Krog, his wife and his best friend Winsnes, used to come every day with laden baskets which our maids, Paca and Anamaria, turned into fabulous paellas. [...].

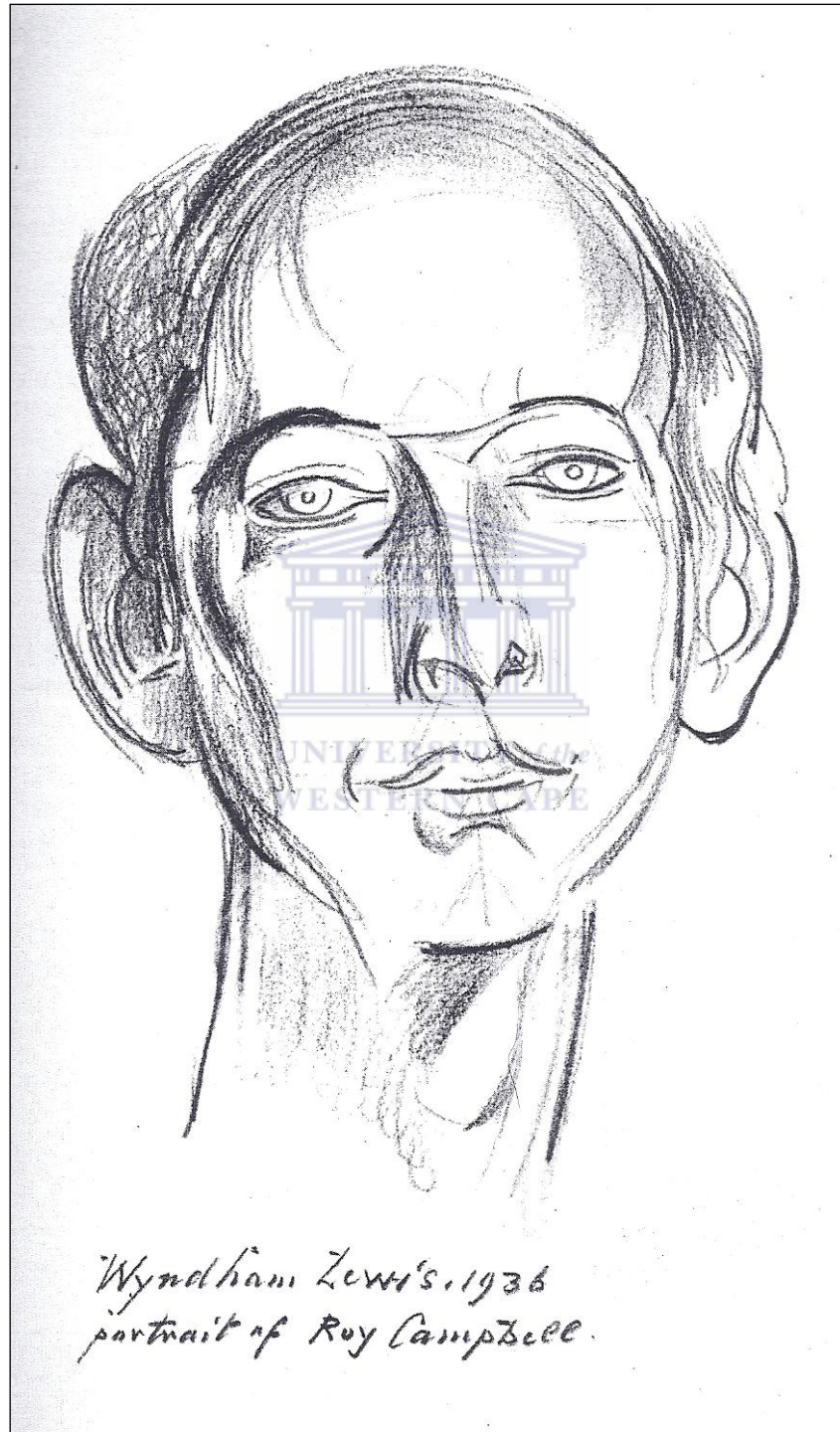
Tess and I loved the expeditions we sometimes made to a distant *finca*, a sort of Sleeping-Beauty manor-house some ten kilometres up-stream from us. Antonio Fuster, the father of our two maids, and his two youngest daughters took us there about once a month. He was the *Capataz* (overseer) of an absentee landlord. (in Coullie, 2011:48)

On these excursions the Campbell children would drink the healing waters of the Holy Spring of St Anne, eat wild figs, watch the flight of kingfishers and orioles, and bathe in the river's waterfall; these outings were, Anna adds, "like the day of Creation" (2011:49).



'One must be theatrical at all costs'

- Roy Campbell, 1926.



Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombadiering* (1937:22)

Introduction

It is precisely modernism's agitated concern with community – with problems of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and exile, solidarity and hierarchy, social essence and social destiny – which shapes its politics. . . . [W]e need to stop positing community as the missing term of value whose restoration will assure the improvement of culture, and begin to understand it as a problematic term that is always already there and in relation to which the cultural work of the text (modernist or otherwise) is already being performed. (English, 1994:24, 25)

This project locates itself as part of a recent revival of interest in literary modernism; a revival that pays attention to the artistic and literary impulses between 1910 and 1940 in the context of new debates about the interaction between modern global experience, and the ways in which subjectivity, identity, and community are understood. These interests to an extent receive their impetus from the current concern with postcolonial perspectives.¹ Modernism, a term used loosely here to encompass a disparate collection of “new” and iconoclastic creative responses to the rapid social, political and epistemological changes of the early twentieth century (particularly in Europe, America and Britain), speaks to a contemporary interest in how “selfhood”, in its historical and literary guise, and in its relationship to notions of community, is experienced and represented in times of accelerated historical and global change.²

It is particularly in literary criticism on modernist writers, many of whom assert conservative or esoteric political agendas in prose, while pursuing an experimental artistic style, that theoretical approaches have evolved which read the relationship between private, psychological experience, public expression, and the shaping forces of discourses, which include those of literary form.³ However, within South African literary criticism in general, and Campbell criticism in particular, only a little work of this kind has been done. In two relevant fields of literary studies – gender and postcolonial studies – arguments have been made for a shift towards an analysis of the ways in which images of women, black people, or other “Others” in literature in English contribute to certain dominant fictional forms which, in turn, produce and describe the single, coherent Western “self”. In an early work exploring the

¹ Literary interpretations in the United States, for example, have long concerned themselves with the ways in which narratives of all kinds serve to both express and invent “subjectivity”, especially in relation to “National” and, more recently “Postnational” ideologies. An issue of the journal *Modern Fiction Studies*, was devoted to “National Narratives, Postnational Narration” (*MFS*. Spring 1997 (43)1). My understanding of the debates around questions of community in modernist writing is influenced largely by Jessica Berman’s study (2001).

² For a discussion of definitions and the dating of the modernist era, see for example Bradbury and McFarlane (1991).

³ See, for example, Fredric Jameson (1979), Kaja Silverman (1992), and Jacqueline Rose’s critical biography of Sylvia Plath (1991).

politics of aesthetics, Fredric Jameson has insisted on the value of “reading”, as opposed to “judging”, the political positions of writers as responses to the discursive frameworks of their times. More recently, postcolonial critics have argued compellingly that the Western literary tradition would do well to consider the role of racialized “othering” in the mainstream canon, and to explore the ways in which representations of race are not merely an adjunct to narrative, but a creative force at work in its construction. Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* (1992) makes this argument, for instance, in relation to the literature of the United States.⁴

Both Morrison’s position and Jameson’s interpretive method invite a critical approach that allows us to read the lamented “shortcomings” of a writer’s oeuvre as important registers of the variety of discourses, often contradictory and half-apprehended, that produce literary work. This interpretive spirit, applied to Roy Campbell’s writing, aids an understanding of the concerns among writers of his time. In this study I am interested in Campbell’s masculinist myth-making; in particular I am concerned with how his self-representations as well as his poetic themes help him to negotiate a place in a modernist canon as a colonial “outsider”. My further interest in this thesis is in possible relationships between issues in early twentieth century South African literature in English, the concerns of (mainly British) literary modernism, and Campbell’s poetic attempt to shape and invent ways of being which, at first glance, cohere around a purported, but by no means established, notion of “colonial masculinity”.

Roy Campbell’s place in the South African literary “canon”

Roy Campbell is now regarded as a literary anachronism. Where at one point he was considered a key figure in sketches of a nascent canon of South African literature in English (see for example Gray, 1979, Coetzee, 1988, and Van Wyk Smith, 1988 and 1990), Campbell has lost this ground on two counts: both in that his poetry has faded from view,⁵ but also in

⁴ Jameson’s comments on the work of Wyndham Lewis are apt here:

[H]is artistic integrity is to be conceived, not as something distinct from his regrettable ideological lapses (as when we admire his art, *in spite of* his opinions), but rather in the very intransigence with which he makes himself the impersonal registering apparatus for forces which he means to record [...] in all their primal ugliness. (1979:21)

⁵ This is evident from the fact that Campbell’s work is less prominent in school networks and poetry anthologies than it once was. In the case of South African anthologies, it may be that he is implicitly associated with a bygone consciousness – white, colonial, male – and thus no longer “speaks” to a South African audience. In the case of international anthologies it may be that he has been eclipsed by better, and more contemporary poetry; or that the appeal of a “colonial” poet no longer holds. Phil van Schalkwyk (2007) offers a brief survey of the fortunes of white South African writing in international anthologies of twentieth century poetry. He suggests

that the notion of a South African literary canon has been actively under review. Recent critical histories of South African literature foreground its “fractured” nature, as a result of both its linguistic diversity and the political imperative to revise the imbalances in literary historiography. On these grounds, Leon De Kock (2005) has argued that one cannot speak of “a” South African literature, and that this acknowledgement of its fragmented nature releases critics from the pressure of synthesis; a pressure first felt in the Afrikaans Movement of the 1930s and which acquired a different force during the years of apartheid and resistance to it.⁶ De Kock’s extreme statement of this position indicates that the notion of a South African “canon” has been increasingly contested, and the monumentalized figures within it, capsized.⁷

Campbell had lost popularity abroad particularly after his vehement expressions of support for Franco during and after the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. But in South Africa until the 1980s at least, he continued to be regarded as perhaps the first major South African-born poet writing in English. Several critical reviews of his work appeared in this decade, questioning Campbell’s perspective on his native country, and in particular his views on race. Perhaps the best known of these critiques would be Jeremy Cronin’s (1984) close reading of the poem

that Campbell’s “fall from grace” may be “partly political, and partly a matter of literary fashion” (2007:135), however the exclusion of Plomer, whom he terms a “fine, insightful poet” (2007:135) is harder to fathom. Campbell does appear in two recent Oxford anthologies, by John Wain (1990) and Philip Larkin (1998) but these “show a preference for his epigrammatic and polemical works, with his famous quatrain, ‘On some South African novelists’, being the only poem present in both these anthologies. Furthermore, one searches in vain for those poems of Campbell and Plomer that have come to be seen as significant within the South African literary system, most importantly Campbell’s ‘Rounding the Cape’ and Plomer’s ‘The Scorpion’”(135). Antony Akerman knew Campbell’s work as a schoolboy at Michaelhouse in the days when his poems were staple high school fare: “Thanks to Uys Krige’s 1960 Campbell anthology, I encountered ‘The Zebras’, ‘The Serf’ and ‘The Zulu Girl’ when I was in Standard IV. How robust they seemed when compared to Wordsworth’s ‘The Daffodils’. What was also extraordinary, and novel for me at the time, was that the poems were about us, were set in South Africa” (Akerman, 2004:643). It is interesting that Campbell’s work did not appear in the 3rd Edition of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (1983). However in the 4th (1993) and 5th editions (2005), the new editors have included two of his short lyrics, “The Zulu Girl”, and the beautifully sensual poem, “The Sisters”.

⁶ De Kock argues further: “In fact, the very event of authorized oneness - perhaps even dangerously authorized oneness - was compelling us to take a hard look at the breaks, now that we were free of the immediate need to defend the existence of South African literature itself as a site of struggle, now that we were free of the compelling urge to validate our identities” (2005:70). In her account of South African drama, Loren Kruger formulates this point in a more concrete manner. In her figuring, post-1994, “without the binding force of a common enemy, discrepancies in economic and social conditions opened too wide to permit easy appeals to a unified national culture” (1999:191). She argues that the result of this is that much of the interesting work in theatre appears in festivals or out of formal theatre contexts. Antony Akerman’s account of trying to produce *Dark Outsider* would testify to this claim (see chapter 1). Kruger’s term, “post anti-apartheid literature” thus points to the apparent fragmentation of South African culture with the end of the anti-apartheid movement.

⁷ “The reason I was able to ask the question in the first place, ‘Does South African Literature Exist’, and make it educative, was that it was one of the few questions one could ask about the field that did not remove the issue of referential fracture, namely the tearing away, or tearing apart, of customary means of self-understanding in a context challenged by otherness, which I felt was fundamental to the historical constitution of this unsteady ‘field’” (De Kock, 2005:69).

“Rounding the Cape”, which argues that the poem expresses a fantasy of “white flight” in the face of an intractable continent and its “alien” inhabitants. But as Phil Van Schalkwyk points out, the limitations of this view do not affect its mythic force for certain readers. With reference to Malvern van Wyk Smith’s (1990) fine exploration of the Adamastor myth, Van Schalkwyk suggests that Campbell’s *Adamastor* volume “provided a myth through which to explore the clash between Europe and Africa. Almost every subsequent white South African English poet would be indebted to Campbell” (2007:150). This reading gives ongoing significance to Campbell’s ominous representation of European encounters with Africa, one which has its roots in Renaissance representations. As Van Schalkwyk points out, “the fears underlying the ominous and binary-ridden endings of the poems by Campbell and Plomer cannot be contained by borders of time and genre, and have been perpetuated well into the new South African dispensation” (2007:151). He points to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and John Conyngham’s *The Lostness of Alice* (1998) as expressions of these same anxieties, albeit that they are written 100 years apart.

Following de Kock’s suggestion, I will propose in this thesis that Campbell’s fairly recent divorce from a particular version of a national literary history liberates his work to be explored along different lines. This is an argument that Jonathan Crewe makes in his article on “The Specter of Adamastor”, in which he calls for a “reprocessing rather than denial or attempted erasure of the past”. Specifically, he argues that “treating Campbell’s works as belated products – and after-effects – of the early modern European imperial imaginary heightens their cultural legibility and political significance; it also gives a continuing heuristic importance to Campbell’s career, both in South Africa and beyond it” (1997:27). While Crewe pursues this analysis by developing more fully the Renaissance imaginary at work in Campbell’s *Adamastor* poems, my interest is in exploring both Campbell’s work and his literary personality more fully in terms of modernist concerns.

Campbell’s early critics felt that his poetry brought a revitalising southern energy to the “jaded” cultural milieu of post-war England; and Campbell himself held that his colonial roots lent energy to his writing. Apart from his poetic representation of the reviving energy of the “South”, Campbell was involved in early attempts to sketch out a canon of South African

literature, and in his essays lent support to the emerging Afrikaans movement of the 1930s.⁸ These examples point to his interest in the potential of a colonial identity to engage with modernist concerns about reinvigorating language and imagination; in Ezra Pound's famous phrase, the injunction to modernist writers to "make it new".

South African and modernist literary concerns

Campbell's early work epitomizes what J.M. Coetzee has termed "white writing" – a literature that bears the burden of articulating a specifically "South African" consciousness in the context of the violent history of colonial settlement. Coetzee tracks the failure of artists and writers to find a mode that would negotiate a path between inherited European narrative traditions and the indigenous social and natural environment. For settlers there were only either inadequate or inappropriate borrowed tropes, absurdly applied, or the attractive, but superimposed fantasies of passing adventurers; ultimately no transposed literary form adequately expressed the consciousness of those whom Coetzee has described as "no longer European, not yet African" (1988:11). Coetzee points out that this dissatisfaction with the language which is meant to "speak" Africa, has to do with the fact that the literature he is concerned with seeks from Africa an "essentialist conception of language", "a natural or Adamic language, one in which Africa will naturally express itself, that is to say, a language in which there is no split between signifier and signified, and things are their name" (1988:9). The failure of settlers to intuit this "language" that speaks of and from the landscape is inevitable, Coetzee argues, because it stands for "another failure, by no means inevitable: a failure to imagine a peopled landscape, an inability to conceive a society in South Africa in which there is a place for the self" (1988:9). Campbell's work belongs to this literature, to what Coetzee calls "a literature of empty landscape" and which he defines as a poetic obsession with the "interiority of things, with the heart of the landscape, its rocks and stones, rather than with what decks its surface" (1988:9). Coetzee calls this "a failure of the historical imagination" (1988:9) and explicitly cites Campbell in making this argument. He may also

⁸ Campbell wrote enthusiastically about the emergence of Afrikaans as a medium for literature ("Uys Krige", 1935), and his comments were soon taken up by Prof TJ Haarhoff (1936) in his attempt to sketch out a "holistic" vision of the field. This debate is outlined in chapter 2. In the 1920s, one aim of the *Voorslag* editors was to produce the first bilingual South African literary magazine. Plomer and Campbell engaged Laurens van der Post with this hope in mind. Peter Alexander claims that "Campbell wanted to make the magazine trilingual, by including contributions in Zulu – perhaps Plomer had suggested asking John Dube for articles – but he was never to bring this plan to fruition" (1989:94). Rev John Dube was a friend of Plomer's, and the editor of the Zulu paper *Ilange lase Natal*.

have had in mind Campbell's two well-known "rock" poems, "Tristan da Cunha" and "Rounding the Cape" (from the early *Adamastor* volume), when he makes the following comment:

The poet scans the landscape with his hermeneutic gaze, but it remains trackless, refuses to emerge into meaningfulness as a landscape of signs. He speaks, but the stones are silent [...]. Or when this is not true, when the stones seem on the point of coming to life, they do so in the form of some giant or monster from the past, wordless but breathing vengeance. In the poetry of monsters under the earth we see the return of what is repressed in the poetry of the silent landscape, in the silence that is read upon (that is, once the disguise is stripped off, written on to) the landscape as well as being read out of it: what Roy Campbell calls "the curbed ferocity of beaten tribes". (1988:10)

In my reading of the "rock poems" in chapter 4, I will suggest that the speaker's ambivalent identification with these ancient and inarticulate figures of block-like eternity (the island of Tristan da Cunha, or Table Mountain personified) responds as much to "modernist" interests in the problem of identity, identification and exile as it does to colonial history. An aspect of Campbell's contribution to English poetry, as critics have noted, therefore lies in the ways in which his poems condense these concerns into an imaginative unity.

The problem of expression for early South African "white writers" has been a problem of displacement in which established narrative traditions imported to the "new world" can only express the violence and mutual incomprehension of colonial encounters. While Coetzee's account is specific to the situation of South African writers who are heirs to colonial history, a different, though perhaps related, struggle with the problem of belonging, community and meaningful expression characterised European and British modernism of the early twentieth century. Modernist European and British writers and artists responded to the ways in which language and meaning had become burdened by the ideological weight of the grand narratives of late nineteenth century discourses – including those of imperialism and "progress" in science, trade and industry, as well as those of the emerging human sciences. They were equally aware of the internal rifts in the conception of Europe that attended the First World War, and the rise of mass movements that questioned established social structures. Paul Fussell's classic study of the literature of this war shows its influence on the tone of writing of the age, and particularly on the role of irony, suggesting that "Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so dramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends" (1975:7). But the impact of the First World War in shattering not only the existing European political order, but also the founding ideals of Empire and of the

nineteenth century notions of progress was profound. In Fussell's formulation, "the Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress" (1975:8). The period immediately following the war coincided with Campbell's early adult years in which he lived in Oxford and London, and this was a period in which British and European writing was deeply involved with these concerns.⁹

Campbell's South African "modernism", I suggest, has to do with his productive sense of discomfort in both South Africa and England – a sense of being an outsider, an exile; but also, oddly, an insider, participant in and heir to the current debates and respective literary traditions of each nation. His "modernist" gestures as a writer – his self-styling, his conversion to Catholicism, his quest for a language that reflected "living" traditions – harness and, perhaps, mitigate this discomfort.

Perspectives on Roy Campbell

Scholarly writing devoted to Campbell has appeared in intermittent bursts. An important dissertation by Geoffrey Haresnape (1982) centred specifically on *Voorslag* and the Campbell, Plomer, Van der Post milieu. Haresnape's thesis, which explores *Voorslag* in the context of political and artistic concerns in South Africa and England in the 1920s, is an important source for this dissertation. A book-length study by Rowland Smith (*Lyric and Polemic*, 1972) deals with the full span of Campbell's creative work. Both of these early studies did crucial primary archival work on Campbell, and were written in the context of a

⁹ Jessica Berman describes the ways in which "community" is imagined in this period by writers. Commenting on the work of Walter Benjamin and Raymond Williams she notes:

Both Benjamin and Williams imagine community as the crucial link between speaker and listener and thus as the underlying condition of storytelling. Both Benjamin and Williams also imagine community as the realm in which narrative and history coincide, the realm in which past experiences in common make possible a shared linguistic meaning. And both see, in twentieth-century Europe, the problem of the loss of this realm of the knowable, a loss which becomes for them a key experience of the narratives of modernism. (2001:2)

Berman shows further how this confluence of concerns around community, for Benjamin, is centered on the impact of the First World War. Benjamin expresses this radically revised sense of "community" in his "The Storyteller", in which:

...the specific events of the First World War irrevocably alter the place in which the story of community can be narrated... Community therefore emerges not only as something that is both expressed and perpetuated in narratives, but also something historically contingent, and concerned with its contingency, subject to variation in material circumstances as well as to reconceptualization in the minds of people. ... What happens for Benjamin in the world after the First World War is that the past is like the faraway present, equally in need of translation. (2001:19)

dearth of critical works on South African literature in the 1970s and early 1980s respectively; no such comprehensive study of Campbell's writing has been produced since.

In the mid-1980s, Campbell's work was made available in several collections – notably the four volume *Roy Campbell: Collected Works* (1985 & 1988) – and was the subject of a comprehensive bibliography by D.J. Parsons (1981), while his life story was simultaneously presented to readers in the first Campbell biography by Peter Alexander (1982). A second biography in 2001 by Joseph Pearce, *Bloomsbury and Beyond: The Friends and Enemies of Roy Campbell*, marked the centenary of Campbell's birth. Pearce's title points to Campbell's rejection of the "Bloomsbury group", and publishing houses associated with it (Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press, and T.S. Eliot's Faber and Faber).¹⁰ But it also implies that Campbell took the modernist project further than those experimenting at the metropolitan centre. While this seems far-fetched, it invites a more focused examination of what Campbell's work might mean in relation to the available accounts of "modernism".

More recent engagements with Campbell's work have been able to draw on the now well-developed theoretical insights of postcolonial and feminist theory. In 2001, for example, Judith Coullie published a long-overdue feminist analysis of his autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), which, as criticism had acknowledged for some time, seems to be largely fictional. Her analysis pays attention to the narration of Campbell's hypermasculinist "self" and opens up the debate about the fictional nature of autobiography. The figure of Roy Campbell is a rich source for the new and multi-disciplinary literature on constructions of "masculinity" in South Africa; a concern which has also been taken up by Cheryl Stobie's interest in accounts of Roy Campbell's as well as Mary Campbell's bisexuality (2007).¹¹

Since the 1990s, and in spite of the apparent dwindling interest in Campbell's work, it has been the subject of several other interesting studies. These include Anthony Akerman's critically neglected play, *Dark Outsider* (2000) and a book length study of the poets of the "imperium", Luis de Camões, Thomas Pringle and Roy Campbell (Meihuizen, 2007). Using

¹⁰ Campbell's acclaimed early collection, *Adamastor* (1930), was published by Faber and Faber.

¹¹ See, for example, Robert Morrell's edition, *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (2001). The work in this field is often sociological, and starts from the double premise that, firstly, "masculinity" is associated with a body of expectations and norms that drive the violence characteristic of post-Apartheid South Africa, and secondly, that men and men's experiences are "excluded" from social research by the revisionist focus on women's lives. My interest is of course more in gender as an identity which is imagined and continually reinvented with reference not only to social context but to literary canons.

Fredric Jameson's terminology, Meihuizen convincingly locates Campbell, with some degree of caution, as belonging under "the loosely defined umbrella of anti-modern Modernism", a modernism which protests against aspects of modernisation, which he suggests can "best accommodate the Campbellian aristocratic trajectories of traditionalism, equestrianism, a melding of liberal and conservative tendencies, and a simple existential enthusiasm totally at odds with Modernist *angst* and satiety" (2007:167). Jonathan Crewe (1997) has written of Campbell's *Adamastor* volume of poetry as a repository of "white cultural memory". Graham Pechey (2005) and Tony Voss (2006) have both produced recent work on Campbell that re-situates his role in the history of the English language – Pechey's paper explores Campbell's "lexicon of emigration", and his role in exporting and circulating terms from South African English, and Voss offers salient commentary on the modernist aspects of Campbell's chosen poetic forms, specifically, the "brief epic". In another fascinating paper, Tony Voss (2001) also sketches the history of ideas that lies behind Campbell's relatively unexplored theory of the "equestrian nation" – a quasi-feudal ideal of a community in which writing, and manly "action", such as bullfighting or rodeo riding, are regarded as mutually supportive arts. The relationship between writing and physical action for Campbell, will be discussed further in the final chapters of the thesis.

Phil van Schalkwyk's (2007) account of his experience of teaching South African literature in Poland, presents a striking argument in favour of the value of reading and teaching the works of Roy Campbell and William Plomer today. He argues that students responded well to these poems, especially when he tapped their existing knowledge of European modernism.¹² He suggests that these two early English South African poets afford rich material for a comparative approach to South African literature. More specifically, he invokes their respective places in founding a canon of white South African literature in English; one which has been labelled, according to Malvern van Wyk Smith, a "literature of dread" (Smith, 1990:122-134 cited in van Schalkwyk, 2007:151). Van Schalkwyk argues that this thematic can resonate powerfully for students with a completely different background in and consciousness of politics and history.

¹² He argues:

The problematic relationship of the modernist writers with the extra-literary context, their socio-political involvement driven by a fear of the mob's empowerment owing to the rise of democracy in Europe, can be compared not only to the South African search for an appropriate mode of literary expression, truly and authentically responding to what 'the age demanded', but also to our much more recent Struggle and transition to democracy, and the fear and dread that accompany it for some sections of our population. (2007:144, 145)

Furthermore, the record of Campbell's life can be located within a contemporary discussion about the nature of biographical writing. In this thesis I treat Anthony Akerman's dramatic representation of Campbell's life, *Dark Outsider*,¹³ as a third "biographical" text – one, which, as I argue in chapter 1, offers less information but a more compelling explanation of the workings of Campbell's "literary personality" than the two biographies. Akerman's reflections on the process of writing the play foreground the inescapably fictional nature of the project, in spite of its attempt to stay close to the archival record. Like other biographers, he is explicitly drawn to both the lyrical appeal of Campbell's verse, and the controversial and contradictory aspects of his "literary personality".¹⁴ Akerman has an advantage over the biographers, as I hope my discussion in this chapter will show, in as much as his medium can exploit tension and conflict for dramatic effect, and is less burdened than formal biography by the imperative to explain and resolve these elements.

The figure of Roy Campbell

In a short memoir, the South African poet David Wright describes his reaction on first meeting Roy Campbell in the Wheatsheaf in Soho, "one wet black evening in the spring of 1947", when his "eye was drawn to the flamboyant cocked slouch hat, which I recognized as the headgear of the King's African Rifles". Campbell was sitting with Tambimuttu, a friend of Wright's, who introduced the two men. Having heard the stories of Campbell's literary antagonisms, as well as his fascist sympathies during the Spanish Civil War, Wright was nonplussed:

To find myself in the presence of such an *âme damnée* produced, I remember, an agreeable frisson, as if I were a virgin scurrying past a brothel. Therefore I was wary of this monster. Of our first conversation [...] I only remember that at one point he asked me to send him some poems to pass on to Francis Carey Slater, then preparing a new edition of his anthology of South African verse. To this piece of disinterested generosity I was quite blind. Believing I was supping with the devil, I used my longest spoon and made some politely noncommittal refusal, to Tambi's genuine puzzlement, and to my own, now. (1992:52)

Several years later when they met again, Campbell recognized Wright from this one brief encounter, and a friendship developed between them.

¹³ The play was written in 1991 according to Akerman (2004), but was first performed at the Alexandra Theatre and at the Grahamstown festival in 1995 (Wertheim, 1996:98), and then published in 2000. He points out that it received awards in 1993, before its first performance.

¹⁴ Akerman cites Michael Hastings' introduction to his play on T.S. Eliot's relationship with his first wife, *Tom and Viv*, in which Hastings writes: "In the theatre all biography is fiction, and some fiction is autobiography" (cited in Akerman, 2004:9). In an interview Akerman comments: "And as a person... he was fascinating. ... I mean, he was so controversial and contradictory; he was wonderful dramatic material" (SAFM broadcast, 2001).

Wright's anecdote here points to a theme in Campbell commentary – his much-cited “paradoxical” nature – a warm, generous, likeable man, with a reputation for violent expressions of opinion. Anthony Akerman explicitly states that it is this sense of paradox that attracted him to Campbell as a dramatic subject. The authorized biography of Campbell's life by Peter Alexander is at pains to point out the “contradictions” in Campbell, which Alexander represents as defensive – a heroic “mask” covering up a sensitive and vulnerable nature. But an early review of Alexander's biography by Rowland Smith argues that the biography falls short of interpreting these contradictions in full. He suggests that Alexander's presentation of Campbell's “divided” self becomes a way of avoiding the paradox.¹⁵

I suggest that the “paradox” of Campbell might reflect a more conscious and surface exploration of opposed qualities than the psychological explanation that Alexander proposes. While some commentators have hailed Campbell as a figure of colonial masculinity,¹⁶ it seems apt to regard him also as a dandy of sorts, who drew on an eclectic mix of influences in his self-styling. Known as “Zulu” in his first days in Oxford,¹⁷ he cultivated this image by walking the streets of mid-winter London in 1922 with his baby daughter strapped on his back Zulu-woman style (Alexander, 1982:41). Later, however, his toreador's cape and Cordoba hat became his signature dress, eccentrically combined with other styles, such as his BBC pinstripe suit in the late 40s (Wright, 1992). Campbell's modernist self-styling was flamboyant, rather than impersonal, unlike that of his friend William Plomer¹⁸ who absorbed the neo-classical tenets of Imagism, and the associated doctrine of poetic “impersonality”

¹⁵ Smith argues: “That resort to violence - even if only in rhetoric or imagination - remains an element in Campbell's personality that has to be accounted for. So too do his warmth, generosity and inventive magic. The long-awaited biography does not recreate the presence of these two opposing traits, but covers the ground in between with tact and assurance” (1984:147).

¹⁶ See, for example, O'Brien (1942), “Poet on Horseback”, or Bernard Bergonzi's piece (1967) “A Rightwing Hemingway”. To an extent this is also the thrust of Judith Coullie's (2001) psychoanalytic reading of his autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse*. R.M. Titlestad describes Campbell as “the least academic of poets, and, though some of his work has a fine edge and finish, his inspiration is essentially out-of-doors, and the most significant part of his life has been adventurous and unsheltered” (1934:24). The critical reception of the “literary personality” of Roy Campbell will be explored more fully in chapter 1.

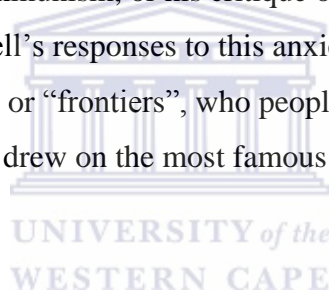
¹⁷ This performance can be dated to his first year in England as an Oxford student, as Tony Voss (2005) has shown. Voss found a comment about Campbell's performances in a note on the literary and dramatic Oriscruscian club in *The Oxford Chronicle*:

The Oriscruscians are a curiously cosmopolitan gathering, and we believe we are moderately accurate in saying their president is a South African who, apart from his very intimate and finished knowledge of the best periods of our drama, happens to speak Zulu most fluently. If you desire it nicely, he is perfectly willing to entertain you with a sample at any moment. (cited in Voss, 2005:9)

¹⁸ Alexander records a curious example of Plomer's understated remaking of his own identity in changing the pronunciation of his name. From rhyming with ‘Homer’, he gave word out to his friends in 1929 that it should now rhyme with ‘rumour’ (Alexander, 1989:155).

instantiated in the person of the “invisible” poet, T.S. Eliot. The vocabulary that Campbell used to describe his outlook – terms such as “solar”, “equestrian”, or “aristocratic”, for example – and which came to represent both Campbell’s personal style, and his social ideals, bore the weight of his eclectic mix of influences.

In this thesis, I hope to broaden this discussion to show Campbell’s hypermasculinist self-styling, particularly in the 1920s, to be a cultural phenomenon, in many ways congruent with the ethos of his time. This is inflected in particular ways by his sense of himself as heir to Empire and to British literary tradition, but equally as an exile from this heritage as a colonial outsider. But his iconoclasm also in some ways expresses an ongoing popular twentieth century cult of maverick individualism as an antidote to the sense of an increasingly managed and bureaucratized social life; a concern expressed by a range of his contemporary writers, from D.H. Lawrence’s critique of the flattening effects of democracy on human distinction, to Wyndham Lewis’s attacks on communism, or his critique of behaviourist methods of priming young men for the Front. Campbell’s responses to this anxiety drew on the figures, both ancient and modern, metropolitan or “frontiers”, who peopled his literary community. In particular, in his early writing, he drew on the most famous of the nineteenth century French dandies, Charles Baudelaire.



Campbell’s sources

Campbell’s literary models early in his career included certain central nineteenth century precursors of literary modernism – notably Arthur Rimbaud, Charles Baudelaire, and Friedrich Nietzsche. As will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, Nietzsche and Baudelaire in particular explore the full expressive and emotional range of the writing self; Baudelaire’s poetry consciously exploits oppositions, in particular those between the satanic and the angelic, between “spleen” and “ideal” – clearly a set of tensions that absorbed Campbell’s interest. Further crucial figures in Campbell’s literary community were the Renaissance dramatists, especially Christopher Marlowe, as well as Miguel Cervantes’ fictional Don Quixote, and the soldier-sailor-poet of the Portuguese Renaissance, Luis Vas de Camões. But he also had a “real” community. On his first arrival in Oxford in 1919, as a very young man, Campbell soon found himself within a milieu in which “self-styling” emerged as a significant response to social and artistic life in post-war England, as is thoroughly explored in Martin Green’s study of the post-war “Decadence” in England, *The Children of the Sun* (1976).

Green's intriguing study traces networks, relationships and attitudes amongst influential literary dandies of the post-First World War generation, specifically between 1918 and 1957. Deriving his terms from anthropological studies of societies which value youth and beauty, Green dubs this set the "children of the sun". The protagonists of his study express in their personal and literary styles a rebellious, anti-patriarchal mood; in part, they revived the dandyism of Oscar Wilde and the "Decadence" of the 1890s, but with a changed sensibility. In the course of this thesis, I will suggest that Campbell's displays of "colonial" masculinity on his arrival in Oxford in 1919 can be seen to accord with the "Sonnenkinder" cult, which Green locates as centred at Oxford from 1918 onwards, and of which the Sitwells were founding figures. As a newly arrived South African, Campbell did not fully share with Green's protagonists the public school education, the direct experience of the changes in England over the war years, or the lingering awareness of the decadence of the 1890s. He does not, perhaps, strictly conform to the dandy cult, exemplified for Green by Brian Howard and Harold Acton, and partly born out of their school experiences at Eton. Moreover, as Geoffrey Haresnape notes, he explicitly rejected "the recrudescence of *fin de siècle* aestheticism embodied in the work and person of Ronald Firbank. Wyndham Lewis's account of a Campbellian outburst in the Eiffel Tower Hotel, Percy Street – 'I won't be a Nineties man!' – is corroborated by Campbell's comment to his father: 'art is not developed by a lot of long-haired fools in velvet jackets'" (Haresnape, 1982:20). But in spite of these protestations, in many ways his self-styling corresponded to this broad cultural phenomenon.

Drawing on Ellen Moers' account of the nineteenth century dandy, Green points to the three distinct, but interrelated figures who formed this set: the self-dedicated dandy, the sensitive naïf (Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood for example), and the ebullient rogue (for example, Oswald Mosley, Guy Burgess, and Randolph Churchill), a category to which Campbell might be seen to conform. Green writes:

The rogue-rebel is a type one often finds in conjunction with the dandy-aesthete, even though he is the latter's opposite by ordinary criteria. The rogue is often coarse, rough, brutal, and careless. He is like the dandy, however, in his conscious enjoyment of his own style and in his rebellion against mature and responsible morality. Sexually he is as much the narcissist as the dandy is, but "typically" the rogue is heterosexual, the dandy homosexual. (1976:12)

And like the dandy, the "rogue", too, enjoys paradox.

What Campbell had in common with this set was a delight in verbal fireworks, in outrageous

individuality, and in cultivating a distinctive sense of self. That he was more “roguish”, and cultivated his image along the lines of colonial boorishness, is an element of his distinction. I suggest that his already ambiguous relationship to the authority of metropolitan values as a colonial outsider made it necessary for him to perform an iconoclastic identity that would have accorded with this half-establishment, half-contrary spirit at work as a current among Oxford students and their mentors post-1918.¹⁹

A number of the key figures in Green’s study were important people in Campbell’s social life in London and Oxford between 1918 and 1924. Among the women dandies that Green identifies – Nancy Mitford, Virginia Woolf, Edith Sitwell and the young Nancy Cunard (1976:12) – the last two were friends of Campbell’s from his first years in London. Campbell became friends with the Sitwells – who revived Oxford dandyism, in Green’s view – through the agency of William Walton with whom he formed a close friendship during his single year at Oxford in 1919. Green doesn’t mention Vita Sackville-West in this list, but she and her husband Harold Nicolson do appear throughout his book. Harold Nicolson, who served in the foreign office from 1920 to 1929, embodies for Green the curious relationship between dandies and establishment culture. The Nicolsons have a significant part to play in the Campbell story in chapter 1 of this thesis.

A further point of interest, though one harder to pursue, links these three figures of the “Children of the Sun” cult, to the stock *commedia dell’arte* figures of Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin, which entered English modernist culture through French cabaret in the late 19th century, and through French poetry, particularly that of Jules Laforgue.²⁰ Diaghilev’s

¹⁹ At the end of this study, Green shows how a number of his chief protagonists of the 1920s become important figures in cultural and political life in England by the 1950s, collectively making up a central “ganglion” in the nervous system of England. But in the 1920s, they distinguished themselves from the adult patriarchal world of maturity, family, nationalism and all forms of belief and commitment that would see them inheriting the mantle of patriarchal adulthood.

²⁰ Green points out that Baudelaire and his circle were deeply interested in the *commedia dell’arte* styles, and in particular, “the figure of Pierrot, who came to represent to them the artist in modern society”, which Baudelaire emulated in his years of personal dandyism between 1842 – 1844”. The Pierrots of this period were marked by “pale and naked faces”, and “the subjugation of all animal and even physical exuberance” (1976:21). Green goes on to argue for the central legacy of the *commedia* to English modernism:

I want to suggest that the postwar sensibility as a whole was in some sense dominated by the *commedia*. The femme fatale, the dandy, the rogue, the naïf are after all *commedia dell’arte* kinds of categories ... the similarity is that they are both products of the same way of conceiving human types and life’s conditions. Also the fantasy, naïveté, and formalism of the genre seem particularly suited to the *Sonnenkind* temperament. ... Moreover, modernism entered English poetry under the clear aegis of Pierrot. T.S. Eliot’s poetry in his *Prufrock* volume of 1917, and to some extent in *The Waste Land*, was heavily influenced and inspired by that of Jules Laforgue, who was himself inspired, and indeed obsessed by the figure of Pierrot... Laforgue transformed his other major objective correlatives, Hamlet and

Russian ballet offered an alternative aesthetic to that of sport (in particular cricket), and the ballet's post-war English performances particularly attracted the young, educated elite who were profoundly disaffected with English "values" as expounded by the country's war-time leaders.²¹ Green's study shows the mobility of the post-war cult of self-making in resistance to the "Fathers" who had authorized the catastrophic war. The young men who are his subjects had evaded likely fatality in the war by virtue of their birthdates. In consequence these dandies "felt it had been left to them to keep that memory alive" (1976:44). The "memory" is both of the policies that led to war, and of course its cost to young men.

Campbell's self-styling not only accords with the spirit of his English milieu, but also reflects his philosophical and poetic interests in the notion of "selfhood" as a touchstone for truth of some kind. This idea was important for Campbell in his movement between South Africa and England in the 1920s, finding himself as an "outsider" in both contexts, in which he found his ideals of community and "civilization" had been corrupted. In as much as he struggled with the problem of identity and selfhood, and found himself increasingly defining these within the community of a literary canon, he participated in some of the key problems (and solutions) of the high Anglo-European modernist writers. As I will suggest in chapter 2, the notion that an expressive "self" had value formed central common ground between Campbell and Wyndham Lewis in the 1920s, at a time when the doctrine of poetic "impersonality" had gained ascendance among a number of influential British writers.

Voorslag and modernism

Campbell and his South African literary friends, William Plomer and Laurens van der Post, were influenced by the works of modernists elsewhere. The literary magazine *Voorslag*, founded and edited by Campbell in 1926, was modelled on literary magazines in Britain and America, and in particular drew inspiration from Wyndham Lewis' Vorticist magazine, *Blast*. In the period between 1918, when he arrived in England to enrol at Oxford University, and 1924 when he returned to South Africa having published his first major poem, *The Flaming Terrrapin*, Campbell had met Wyndham Lewis, William Walton, Philip Heseltine, T.S. Eliot, the Sitwell family, Nina Hamnett, Augustus John, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Earp, Edgell

Lohengrin, into versions of Pierrot, pale, ineffectual, ironic, yearning figures. [...] Laforgue ... made his Pierrot essentially a modern figure and gave him the background of the modern Waste Land. (1976:32, 33)

²¹ While I am not aware of any commentary on the ballet by Campbell, Peter Alexander notes in a recent article that Campbell had met Diaghilev, along with the painter Utrillo, during his visits to Paris with T.W. Earp in 1919 (2006:13).

Rickword and a number of other literary, musical and artistic figures active in the inter-war period of high modernism in England. On his return to South Africa he had a strong sense of avant-garde culture in England, and he wished to make use of this spirit in the South African context. Campbell's intention was that *Voorslag* should cause discomfort and disturbance in what he perceived to be a comfortable, unthinking, bigoted colonial society. Restless and impatient with conventional thought, Campbell's impulses to satirize and shock the white South African middle-class world could fruitfully invoke the polemical methods and vocabulary of Lewis in particular. However, the focus of his prose would change following *Voorslag*, as is explored further in chapter 2.

Politics and religion

In 1926, Campbell abandoned *Voorslag*, and left South Africa for good. His life from then on was lived between England, the south of France and the Iberian peninsula, finally settling in Portugal in the 1950s until the time of his death in 1957. He and his family became Catholic soon after their move to Spain in the early 1930s. Later in this decade, his views on the Spanish Civil War became infamous among his peers, as he declared support for General Franco's fascist regime, against many of the writers of his time (and several friends) sympathetic to the Republican cause. His second autobiography claims, dubiously, that he "fought" for Franco in the civil war (although he might have meant "fought" in a literary rather than literal sense). However, as he also volunteered for the British Army during World War II, and served in the King's African Rifles, it is clear that his brand of fascism was not strongly pro-Hitler, although he was closely connected to Wyndham Lewis in the early 1930s, at the time that Lewis wrote his pamphlet on *Hitler* (1931). I will suggest that some of Campbell's political comments in *Broken Record* (1934), his first autobiography, reflected Lewis's views at this time more or less directly.²² Although Lewis retracted his defence of Hitler in the late 1930s, Fredric Jameson argues that Lewis's fascist thinking endured throughout his life. Jameson describes Lewis's position as founded on a resistance to capitalism but equally to communism, which he saw as eliding and eliminating all impulses towards distinction, tradition, personality and excellence; a position with which Campbell would sympathize.

²² Joseph Pearce records that Lewis introduced Campbell to Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists, in 1936, but Campbell did not take to Mosley (2001:199). Mosley, Green argues, conformed to the archetype of the "rogue" of the Sonnenkinder cult, as I am sure, did Wyndham Lewis himself.

In later life, after 1945, Campbell's poetic focus was increasingly on translation, with a Provençal and Iberian bias. His particular achievements at this point were his highly commended translations, which included a translation of Charles Baudelaire's volume, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1952) and the poems of the mediaeval mystic, St John of the Cross (1951). His conversion to Catholicism was in keeping with similar moves among many of his British counterparts. When Edith Sitwell was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1955, she asked Mary and Roy Campbell to be among her godparents, consolidating their relationship with the Sitwells, with whom he had been closely associated in the early 1920s (Alexander, 1982:215). However, this study is mainly concerned with Campbell's work and thought during the interwar period, as it is in these years that the interaction between his South African cultural experiences, his encounter with English modernism, and his masculinist personae, can be most sharply traced. The Spanish Civil War makes it clear that these themes are part of a broader set of social and cultural concerns which Campbell shared with the poets and writers of his day.

Violence: Satire and War

The violent element of Campbell's persona expressed itself most forcefully in his long satirical poems, *The Wayzgoose*, *The Georgiad*, and *Flowering Rifle*, as well as in his prose comments and statements on the Spanish Civil War. In my view, some of these satires, (especially the first two), were at moments almost as funny as they were obnoxious; and Campbell himself was known as a humorist, if not always a wit. James English points out in *Comic Transactions* that humour is a means of representing, and perhaps negotiating, the faultlines in a society at a given moment. He argues that the "radically social character" of jokes may be obscured by the often formalist ways in which they are studied (1994:3). Campbell, and his close friend Wyndham Lewis, shared a taste for satire. Lewis wished to see himself as the "Enemy" of conventional society and thought, drawing on the figure of Diogenes, the cynic, living as an outcast in the midst of society. Campbell figured Lewis as a Jonsonian satirist, exposing, but never redeeming, the foibles of the thinkers, artists and society of his time; and was himself frequently the object of Lewis's satires. Campbell's own satire was closer to that of Pope or Dryden, on which it was modelled; but he had also read widely in Elizabethan drama, and enjoyed paradox and Renaissance forms of wit. For both men humour was an important "spur" with which to foreground, ridicule and challenge ideas that appeared to be settling into accepted forms. Their humour is saturated with violence, and

at times nastiness. English points out that the “incongruity” which is usually shown to give rise to the joke, should be seen as “a particular aspect of or moment within, some binding tension or contradiction on the level of the social” (English, 1994:8). Specifically, comic practice is “in some measure an assertion of group against group, an effect and an event of struggle, a form of symbolic violence” (1994:9). But even the definition of the “group” who enjoys the joke is unstable: the laughers and the joker may not be on the same side, or understand the joke in the same way. Notwithstanding this, the joke is necessarily social, in that an audience is indispensable, whatever antipathies may be between audience and joker, or within the audience itself.²³ The struggle over the social, over shared understanding, is always at work in the joke, and usually foregrounded by it. As English observes, “... there are no jokes in paradise ...” (1994:9).

The Spanish Civil War offered Campbell, and many British writers and artists, a more romantic and concrete opportunity to try to define this desired sense of “community”. This war was a testing ground for artists and intellectuals disaffected with an English liberal tradition, seeking a more radical and far-reaching politics.²⁴ In the case of several of the best known of the left-wing British poets and writers in question – Stephen Spender, C. Day-Lewis, Louis MacNeice, W.H. Auden and George Orwell – the mismatch between the grassroots politics of unionized Spanish labour and the increasingly bloody Stalinist practices of the Republican government unseated by Franco, ultimately led to a sense that communism’s promise of social unity (and for writers, of unity between the artist and the “ordinary” man) had failed profoundly. Campbell, a supporter of the insurgent side during this war, would later crow about this. However his desire for a union of poetry with “life” had much in common with that of the poets he collectively named “MacSpaunday” (Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, W.H. Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis). This war afforded him an opportunity to define his ideal notions of community; and, as with the left-wing British writers, he would later have to admit that this impulse led him down some dubious paths.

²³ With reference to Freud’s theory of “Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious”, English suggests that: Joke-work is thus best understood in terms of subjective positioning and of patterns of identification... What the joke *does* is to intervene in a particular system of social relationships, putting into circulation a ‘mutilated and altered script’ of certain of the system’s elements, a ‘most strange revision’ of the problems or contradictions that bind those elements within the system. (*JRU* 160, 162 cited in English, 1994:15,16)

²⁴ See Hugh Ford, *A Poet’s War* (1965). Valentine Cunningham’s (1988) account of the Spanish Civil War also tracks the interaction between British and international politics, and the ways in which British writers responded to the promise of social transformation during these years.

Modernist poetry and colonial frontiers

Campbell's first successful poem, the epic *The Flaming Terrapin*, evokes a myth of a revitalizing Southern masculinity. His lifelong ideal of an "equestrian nation" (discussed in chapter 3) appears to have colonial roots, but functions as a generalized and universal idea, abstracted from a real history of colonialism. While he subscribed to a martial notion of male camaraderie, Campbell also derided an imperial programmatic making of men intended to address fears of racial and national decline. And alongside this, the record of his early years is of consistent failure to enter the boys "club" both at school in South Africa, and later at Oxford University, which produced many of the powerful men of Empire.²⁵ Unlike his friend William Plomer, who spent several years at Rugby as a teenager, and later sought out a place in the influential Bloomsbury group in London, Campbell only entered the English scene as an 18 year old matriculant, having failed to perform at Durban High School, or at Natal Technical College. He missed his final chance at academic respectability by failing to master Greek sufficiently for admission to Oxford University.

Moreover, his early criticism repeatedly aimed pot-shots at the colonial adventure writers Haggard, Kipling and Fitzgerald and he derided the heroic formulations of Tennyson and Kipling, despite some resonances of their work in his. He is fond of concluding his early essays with some version of the lines:

When the mute and muzzled stripling
Shall defy the muzzled bore
When the Rudyard's cease from Kipling
And the Haggards Ride no more.²⁶

His colonial hypermasculine representations, especially as espoused in his autobiographies, and drawn on in interesting and various ways in his poetry, have been both hailed and vilified

²⁵ Anne Harries' novel, *Manly Pursuits* (1999) for example, foregrounds the impact of an Oxford education in producing the men of Empire (such as Rhodes and Milner) at work in South Africa around the time of the South African War. But Campbell's own story equally reflects the impact of an Oxford education. His intentions for his South African literary magazine, *Voorslag*, were derailed by the political ambitions of Lewis Reynolds, another Oxford man, whose wish to please his mentor, General Jan Smuts, among others, led him to censor Campbell's editorial team and ruin their aims for the magazine.

²⁶ Quoted in Campbell, Roy, "The Significance of Turbott Wolfe" (1926), in *Voorslag*, (CW IV, 1988:193). A slightly different version appears in Campbell's essay "Modern Poetry and Contemporary History" (1925), published in *The Natal Witness*: "When the mute, long-deafened stripling/ Shall defy the muzzled bore/ When the Rudyard's cease from Kipling/ And the Haggards Ride no more" (CW IV, 1988:196). This is used here to support his argument that "It is not enough to have made a grocer's paradise of half the earth: we must have a culture of our own if we intend to keep our place, especially where we come so much into contact with races who have not the advantages of a long civilisation behind them. We must have a deeper and less ostentatious pride in ourselves than that which is born of our richness and power" (CW IV, 1988:186).

in the critical tradition, perhaps simply marking the fading taste for colonial adventure of a certain kind; yet this was never exactly Campbell's genre. Certainly he regarded his work as more serious and experimental than the mere redeployment of adventure fantasy.

The intimate relationship between the frontiers of Empire and the urban modernist imagination has been increasingly a theme in studies of modernism. Robert Crawford's study of T.S. Eliot, *The Savage and the City in the work of T.S. Eliot* (1987), for example, shows Eliot's immersion in adventure literature as a boy, particularly that of Mayne Reid, and the impact of this literature on his vision of the modern metropolis. But a number of other recent studies also pursue this theme, exploring not only the literary impact of an imagined frontier, or the pursuit of a "primitivist" sensibility in art and literature, but also the appropriation of these themes into popular entertainment forms. Laura Winkiel, for example, tracks what she terms "cabaret modernism" associated with the Vorticist movement; she argues that it invoked and exploited the emotive potential of racial differences in a world that seemed homogenized by mass movements of all kinds.²⁷

Campbell's "equestrian" themes, initially drawn from a colonial frontier imaginary, are reworked into a generalized myth by his encounters with Spain, Provence and the remnants of pagan cultures he finds there – in particular Mithraism.²⁸ His poetry in the 1930s reflects a quest for a mythology which can transform the personal outsider theme of his first volumes into this broader vision. Mithraism modulates, as Joseph Pearce argues, into Catholicism.

My suggestion in this thesis is that Campbell's self-representations, as well as his theories about language and action as expressed in his prose works, should be more firmly situated in

²⁷ Winkiel offers a convincing account of the ultimately conservative intentions of "racial masquerade" in cabaret modernism. She notes:

The cabaret craze arrived in England in 1912, and by 1914 had fostered the creation of the short-lived English avant-garde group, the Vorticists. Their work is symptomatic of a crisis of the place of art in a world of rising mass democracy and anticolonialist movements. The deterritorialized, ahistorical space of vorticism created by the English avant-garde in the first issue of their little magazine *Blast* enacts what I call *cabaret modernism*, a heterotopia where essentialized categories of race are called into question *and* reaffirmed. The avant-garde's participation in various forms of racial masquerade signals a shift in the categories of race themselves... Cabaret modernism could both unleash heterogeneity in a seemingly spontaneous and creative forum and strictly delimit it through a rigorously maintained racial definition of the artist. (2008:123)

²⁸ In chapter 5 I explore Wyndham Lewis's fictional comparison between Campbell's interest in Mediterranean culture and that of D.H. Lawrence. Peter Merrington's research has shown the ways in which certain early twentieth century South African writers identified the Cape with the Mediterranean, and with the attendant associations of pagan and classical cultural history. In particular, his paper traces the friendship between D.H. Lawrence, the South African artist Jan Juta, and his sister Renee Juta, a writer. In exploring their connection, he shows how the Lawrentian quest for the primitive is reworked by the Jutas and forms part of a larger discourse in which the Cape is understood as a version of an idyllic Mediterranean world (2007).

the context of modernist contestations about the relationship between “self” and community in literature. If Campbell’s vision of a physical and intellectual aristocracy can be read as a modernist reformulation of colonial masculinity, then what might this add to an understanding of metropolitan literary modernism of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as to readings of “masculinity”? I will argue that what makes Campbell outmoded on the one hand, is also what makes him a fascinating figure for contemporary re-evaluation; namely what might be termed, borrowing Kaja Silverman’s description of T.E. Lawrence, his “hyperbolic permeability”. By this I mean Campbell’s particular susceptibility to positions, gestures, styles, which he adopts with ease, and deploys in different contexts (but to which he does not like to be confined) as well as his strategic invention of personae in response to narrow or opaque rules governing expression. As his status as the founding figure of an English South African literary canon fades from view, I suggest, it becomes more possible to view him as a figure in whom the tensions between a colonial and metropolitan masculine identity play themselves out as a specifically modernist problem, both in his writing and in his personal reputation. Like his contemporary literary “master” Wyndham Lewis, Campbell is “unassimilable” in Anthony Woodward’s phrase – an iconoclast, an independent. But Campbell responds more specifically to confining contexts, the restrictive attribution of ideas to identities. In playing out the contradictions between tradition and modernity (in the bizarre form of a “simple” but dandified man), Campbell’s positions reflect the tensions within modernist writing in raw and striking ways. More than this, he gives us a place to read the way in which the “failure of the imagination” that J.M. Coetzee identifies in early South African “white writing”, its inability to transplant the literary codes meaningfully onto the South African social and physical landscape, becomes in its early twentieth century form an instance – perhaps a generative one – of the high modernist tension between the desire for community implicit in canonicity and the celebration of outrageous individuality in an anti-heroic, disenchanting age.

Chapter One: On the “literary personality” of Roy Campbell

‘Dead selves upon whose stepping stones I came
With Pegasus, the bugbear of the backers,
A dark outsider, rescued from the knackers
To share the petrification of my fame.’
(Epigraph to *Dark Outsider*, 2000)²⁹

UYS: “And suns go down, and trailing splendours dwindle,
And sails on lonely errands unreturning
Glow with a gold no sunrise can rekindle!”
Roy’s mortal sun has gone down. That lonely sail will never again return from a far errand. But the best of his poetry will continue to glow for us with a gold that time itself will not tarnish.”
VITA: Oh dear, the colonials have started erecting a monument.
(From Anthony Akerman, *Dark Outsider*, 2000:92)

Biography and “literary personality”

The flamboyant “literary personality” of Roy Campbell has attracted attention from many commentators, and is a focal point of interest for me. As critics have noted, his unstable “hypermasculinist” self-representations, mercurial and fraught with paradox as they are, provide intriguing material for further study. Psychoanalytic accounts of the lives of writers by accomplished literary critics such as Jacqueline Rose (1991), Kaja Silverman (1992), and Leo Bersani (1977), may offer useful models for such a study. Like his contemporary, T.E. Lawrence, the subject of Silverman’s study, and along with a number of other notable figures of London’s bohemian art world in the early twentieth-century, Roy Campbell was known for his own iconoclastic personal style, adopting a range of dress accessories such as the Zulu knobkierie, and later appearing in his Cordoba hat, and matador’s cape in the 1930s, and following World War II, his King’s African Rifles accessories, at times combined with his BBC pin-striped suit.³⁰ By means of this cultural cross-dressing, Campbell flaunted his sense of his own exoticism as an “outsider”. In her reading of T.E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Silverman explores the relationship between history and private fantasy expressed in autobiographical writing; in so doing she augments, and to an extent critiques, Edward Said’s more narrowly political analysis of Lawrence’s “Arab ‘masquerade’” (1992:301). For Said, Lawrence’s adoption of an Oriental identity represents an extreme form of Orientalism, in which the Westerner is “not content merely to construct ‘the Orient’” but “seeks to provide its best representative”. Silverman argues that this formulation “forecloses upon Lawrence’s

²⁹ This is an unpublished fragment from Roy Campbell’s last notebook in the Killie Campbell Africana Library.

³⁰ See, for example, David Wright’s description of Campbell in the 1940s (Wright, 1992).

homosexuality and masochism, as well as the hyperbolic permeability of his psyche – his propensity for finding himself within the racial and social Other” (1992:301).³¹

The phrase “hyperbolic permeability” seems an apt description of the very different personality of Roy Campbell; certainly “his propensity for finding himself within the racial and social Other” within his poetry serves to complicate a reading of his apparent “he-man” persona, as I will show in later chapters (and particularly, in chapter 4) of this thesis.³² In Silverman’s reading, Lawrence’s changing self-representation from the *Seven Pillars* to *The Mint*, which “dramatizes the psychic determinants to enlist as an ordinary airman in the Royal Air Force rather than to pursue a distinguished governmental career”, must “oblige us to approach history always through the refractions of desire and identification, and to read race and class insistently in relation to sexuality” (1992:300). In the case of Roy Campbell, the bald and literal question of his sexuality lingers in the air in biographical accounts, but the broader and more interesting questions of desire and identity in his work remain open for further enquiry. This chapter attempts to navigate its way through the existing body of biographical commentary on Campbell’s life, briefly considering the constraints on such biographies which reflect trends specific to South African literary criticism. The intention is to propose an approach to Campbell’s “literary personality” which will support and illuminate, rather than reduce or foreclose upon, a reading of his poetry in the subsequent chapters.

In South African literary criticism, the tendency to divide fiction from history, and to evaluate the fictional text, specifically the novel, in relation to its presentation of historical “truth”, was succinctly addressed in the late 1980s by J.M. Coetzee in his essay on “The Novel Today”.³³ It is perhaps this context that has made it harder for critics to study South African

³¹ Specifically, Silverman sees Lawrence’s ability to “participate psychically in Arab nationalism” as being largely supported by his “particular homosexuality” which “promotes an erotic identification both with its leaders and its servants” (1992:305). The implications of his masochism are complex, and cannot be seen to correspond to power positions in a straightforward manner. Masochism underpins Lawrence’s position as a military leader, as a flamboyant figure whose sexuality relates, in part, to his desirably exotic “Englishness”, which he can deploy in acquiring standing in the Arab world. Equally, however, a different version of it is at work in his yearning for an anonymous, corporate identity as an ordinary airman post-1922 (1992:334). This curious range of subject positions may have bearing on the debates about authorial personality that interest me in chapter 2.

³² Peter Merrington first described Campbell as “permeable”; a term that seems increasingly apt to me. That Silverman’s reading of Lawrence could be usefully adapted to a reading of Campbell and his work was suggested to me by David Bunn.

³³ In this essay Coetzee protests against a prevailing attitude within the humanities in South Africa in which “fiction” is regarded as the “handmaiden” of history, or supplementary to it. The essay addresses the

writers along these lines. In the 1980s and early 1990s Campbell is the subject of a low-key debate between radical left-wing literary critics, such as Jeremy Cronin (1984), who reads his poem “Rounding the Cape” as a fantasy of “white flight”, and literary admirers of his work who find themselves, like Michael Chapman, apparently writing apologies for him.³⁴ In this debate, critical accounts oppose Campbell’s literary virtuosity to his indefensibly conservative, anti-democratic, racist and sexist sentiments; thus literary criticism unavoidably comes up against the problem of “the man”, and his opinions, actions and autobiographical self-representations. However some of the more recent criticism on Campbell shows less constraint by the “discourses of history” than that of the 1980s.

In an introduction to a recent edition of *Social Dynamics* dedicated to South African biography, Cheryl Ann Michael explores the idea that biography is “inextricably tied to the question of the good” (2004:2). She notes its roots in hagiography, “the writing of the exemplary lives of the saints”, and suggests that the modern philosopher Charles Taylor extends this point of origin to an understanding of modern identity; Taylor “argues that our notions of the good frame the very concept of a self, an individual” (2004:2). In an African context, the necessarily “dialectical” definitions of African identity imposed by colonial history raise important questions about the nature of biography; as Michael writes, citing Ato Quayson:

The writing of the life of an individual African then, becomes fraught with the weight of this ‘will-to-identity’. The tendency to read African lives as symbolic of the nation state (and possibly, by extension, the continent) may be understood in terms of the anxieties about the making of ‘viable identities’. If biography as a genre is inescapably linked to considerations of the good, colonial and postcolonial African histories might well be said to intensify this quest, and to make the coupling of ‘lives’ with the good something close to what Frantz Fanon characterised as a ‘nervous condition’.
[...] Are the lives of Africans similarly ‘conscripted’ in the biographical project, and does this in turn mean that African biographies tend towards the polarities of hagiography and demonization? (2004:3)

While the biographies and autobiographies of a white South African writer such as Campbell may be exempt from “enlistment” to the “causes and struggles” of the group (2004:3), this is precisely the source of a different note of anxiety in Campbell studies since the 1980s – one related to the question of the “relevance” of a figure such as Campbell to questions of South

“appropriating appetite of the discourse of history”, an appetite which threatens to “colonize”, in his provocative formulation, the very different discourse, and different set of rules at work in fiction (1988:3, 4). This is a symptom of the demand for “relevance” in academic study under the urgent conditions of Apartheid.

³⁴ See Chapman’s essay, “A Defence in Sociological Times” (1986). More recently, Nicholas Meihuizen points to the same dilemma in his essay “Rehabilitating a Reactionary Terrapin” (2003).

African identity and its relationship to a literary canon. What is the value, or “good” in writing his life? If it fails to serve a national or transnational purpose, what does it exemplify? In the case of Joseph Pearce’s fairly hagiographical biography, the answer to this is made simple – it is directed towards his Catholic conversion, itself representative of a trend within Anglo-literary modernism. But as a South African writer, Roy Campbell’s case is an interesting one in relation to this problem. In the 1970s, Alan Paton found himself unable to write Campbell’s biography, because it would not conform to his notions of a “good life”, in both sexual and political terms (see Alexander, 2010). In recent times, the risk of “hagiographical” interpretations of the great South African poet is offset by his fall from canonical grace in the new national context, as described in the introduction to this thesis. Jonathan Crewe (1997; 1999) argues, compellingly in my view, that this liberates us to re-situate our view of both Campbell and his work – an argument that will be presented more fully in chapter 4. Campbell’s own recurring trope of the “outsider” is malleable enough to speak to the most recent aspect of his “exile” – the dwindling of his fame from its central place in a South African canon, to a less than minor one in world modernist English poetry. Perhaps it is the sense of displacement within Campbell’s own writing which makes it difficult to argue for his contemporary context, and which produces the marked need for biographers and critics to defend their subject; how to see him “in focus”, to use Bergonzi’s phrase (1967:136), is an ongoing problem.

In recent Campbell criticism, the critical instinct to vilify or redeem an interesting writer remains strong, and surfaces in the polarised biographical representations of Campbell’s attitude towards women, and particularly toward his wife, Mary Campbell (née Garman). On the one hand, biographers (and I include the playwright, Anthony Akerman here), represent him as subject to Mary’s “power”, as the most important and influential figure in his life. On the other hand, a few relatively recent works of feminist criticism point out that his representations of Mary (and women on the whole) are dismissive and masculinist (see Coullie, 2001; Stobie, 2007). Stobie argues, with some justice, that the critical heritage reproduces a heterosexist narrative in which Mary Campbell controls Roy with her sexuality, and precipitates within him a crisis of self-confidence as well as of sexual and national identity.

Interest in the Campbells’ marital “crisis” is pervasive among recent biographical commentators – Peter Alexander, Alan Paton, Anthony Akerman, Nicholas Meihuizen,

Cheryl Stobie and others engage with it. Following the Campbells' return to England from South Africa at the end of 1926, they lived for a time in a cottage belonging to John Squire, the editor of the *London Mercury*, in the village of Sevenoaksweald in Kent. There they met Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson, and were soon invited to social events at their beautiful home, Long Barn, and later offered free use of its "gardener's cottage". Peter Alexander claims that the sexual relationship which then evolved between Mary Campbell and Vita Sackville-West, and which led to a temporary separation between the Campbells, "all but wrecked the Campbells' marriage"; it "changed the course of their lives, and scarred the poet's mind and affected his verse to the end of his life" (1982:82). The impact of this moment on Campbell's verse is hard to show. But apart from anecdotal interest, why should this personal (and by now historically remote) struggle matter to literary critics of Campbell's work (aside from implying perhaps, that Mary was responsible for the partial nature of Campbell's poetic achievement)? For the critics mentioned here, this particular "story" from the archive of Campbell's life, carefully unearthed by Alexander, seems to provide a solid and stable point of reference for critical biographers from which to make sense of a variable and self-contradictory figure. In his comments on the process of writing his play, Anthony Akerman sets out his early formulations of its theme as follows: "Is the Campbell play not about a man who was destroyed by the person he loved? An artist destroyed by his muse?" Akerman further notes that this is a "clumsy" formulation, adding that he had no intention of blaming Mary Campbell, for he was well aware "that Campbell bore the seeds of his own destruction within himself" (Akerman, 2002:8). Nonetheless, it makes for a productive dramatic climax to a diverse and varied existence. The crisis in the Campbells' marriage crystallizes the diverse biographical threads of interest in Campbell: his sexuality, his anxieties about literary and cultural authority, as well as his ambivalent relationships to questions of national identity, feudalism, globalism, and literary Anglo-European modernism. In both biographical representations by Alexander (1982) and Pearce (2001), it is this crisis that sets Campbell on his path to the "good" life, in that it drives him to the Mediterranean life, towards a monogamous marriage, and ultimately to his conversion to Catholicism through Mary's agency.

This chapter will outline biographical representations of Campbell in more detail, as a precursor to a highly selective reading of Akerman's play, *Dark Outsider* (2000) and of Campbell's satirical riposte to the events of 1927 and 1928, *The Georgiad* (1931). I will suggest that the strength of Akerman's representation lies in its dramatic ability to condense

the full range of related issues which combine explosively in the alleged moment of crisis in the Campbell marriage; in my view, the play shows the Campbell persona to be less a fiction, than a poetic response to a broad range of anxieties. In the brief account of the “figure” of Roy Campbell outlined below, my premise is that the private thoughts and feelings of a writer, whether living or late, are inaccessible to us as readers, whereas written expressions of “selfhood” offer grounds for a reading of textual and contextual histories. The insights of psychoanalytic literary critics such as Silverman into the ways in which fantasy, often inspired by literary models, works together with social and historical contexts to produce a persona within a text, are deeply interesting. My interest here, however, is in reading Campbell’s “literary personality” as precisely that – a literary one – which will, I hope, contribute usefully to a reading of his work in later chapters.

Campbell and the tradition of the manly outsider

Campbell has been placed by critics within a “tradition” of writers whose reputations as men of action, and as social and political outsiders, seem more significant than their works themselves.³⁵ In 1950, for instance, C.J.D. Harvey described Campbell as:

one of those writers (Byron and D.H. Lawrence, perhaps, are two others) whom it seems impossible to discuss on literary grounds without including a great deal about his personality, his “philosophy”, his politics and other seemingly irrelevant matters, until the poems themselves are almost lost sight of. The reason for this seems to lie mainly in the fact that the writer’s own personality is so important to him, and is at the same time such a strongly individual one, that it is the clearest and most consistent image that emerges from the varied experiences of his poetry. (1950:53)

In critical, biographical and autobiographical accounts, Roy Campbell’s “literary personality” is often depicted as that of an anti-social figure at odds with all contexts; a designation which he applies to himself as well. Bernard Bergonzi describes Campbell’s sense of himself as:

[t]he lone wolf, going his own way in the face of popular opinion. [...] In its most traditional sense it is simply Byronic, where the writer projects himself as a brooding, disdainful solitary; this notion is combined with the later nineteenth century concept of the isolated *poete maudit* – as described, for instance, in Frank Kermode’s *Romantic*

³⁵ In her account of recent Shakespeare biographies, Catherine Belsey (2009) shows how, in an empirical intellectual climate, the “truth” of a writer’s “experience” continues to trump attention to textual sources which may be more pertinent. This in turn can lead to speculative interpretations. This caution seems important and relevant in Campbell studies and in the field of South African fiction. Perhaps with this common biographical tack in mind, J.M. Coetzee’s recent novel *Summertime: Scenes from Provincial Life* (2009) ironically anticipates the empirical quest for the “truth” of his own life by a putative posthumous biographer. The novel thus forces Coetzee biographers to reflect on their own processes in advance of the publication of the first biographies. These are now beginning to appear in print; the first authorized biography of Coetzee has recently been published, and another is in progress, having been uncomfortably preempted in this way.

Image – and both these elements were given intellectual stiffening by the anti-democratic sentiments of various modern conservative thinkers. (1967:134)

Early critics of Campbell's work frequently compare him to Lord Byron, as a self-made outcast, a figure of scandal and melodrama. As R.M. Titlestad wrote, "Byron's life, it has been said, is the most poetic of his works. A poet's life should be a poem, says Milton. Mr Campbell's life is at least of a piece with his poetry..." (1934:25). This appealing, if somewhat old-fashioned, formulation suggests the futility of delving for a truth other than a poetic one in the realm of biography, and to an extent tallies with my approach.

For later twentieth century critics, the figure of Ernest Hemingway becomes a point of obvious comparison. Bernard Bergonzi, for example, argues that:

Campbell and Hemingway shared a capacity for self-dramatization, which expressed itself in a love of violent activity and displays of physical prowess; they both appeared before the world as men of action and tried to hide the fact that they were highly cultivated literary artists. They were both vigorously involved in the Spanish Civil War, if on opposed sides, and were passionate devotees of bull-fighting. A principal difference was that Campbell was a more deeply ideological writer than Hemingway, even if the ideology was never expressed abstractly, or very coherently formulated. (1967:134)

There is no evidence in either Pearce's or Alexander's biographies that Hemingway and Campbell ever met, or knew much about one another, although Hemingway did have a copy of Campbell's *Taurine Provence* (1932) in his Key West library (Reynolds, 1981:107). In the early 1930s at least they must have been in some proximity to one another, when the Campbells were eking out a rural, peasant existence in Altea, and Hemingway spent time in nearby Valencia. There are significant parallels in their interests in Spain, despite their opposed political positions during the Spanish Civil War. Bullfighting, Spanish poetry, particularly that of Gabriel Garcia Lorca and his notion of "duende",³⁶ and Mithraism, were key points of interest for both writers, and will be explored more fully in chapter 5 in reading Campbell's early Spanish volumes, *Flowering Reeds* and *Mithraic Emblems*.

Bergonzi's description of Campbell as "more deeply ideological" than Hemingway is curious, and points to a central "paradox" that has interested Campbell critics. A number of commentators, including Wyndham Lewis,³⁷ and later Alan Paton, and Peter Alexander,

³⁶ "Duende" is an element of artistic experience found in "deep song", and in the experience of the bullring, outlined by Lorca in his essay "In Search of Duende", a lecture originally written in 1933 (1998). This notion will be explored in more detail in the discussion of Campbell's early Spanish poems in chapter 5.

³⁷ Wyndham Lewis, for example, comments in his autobiography *Blasting and Bombardiering* that "of politics he [Campbell] has none, unless they are such as go with a great antipathy for the English 'gentleman' in all his clubmanesque varieties; a great attachment to the back-Veldt of his native South Africa; and a constant desire to

argue that Campbell had no real politics at all, but was simply a sensitive and reactive personality, responding in the heat of the moment. Alexander argues that Campbell's politics reflected his "divided nature", the grounds for which were laid in childhood:

He had become a very complex person indeed. There was fixed in him a hatred of discipline, and a keen need for it; a delight in solitude, and a desire to be recognized by his fellows; a contempt for 'bookishness' and an addiction to poetry. There was a deep-rooted respect for his puritanical upbringing, constantly undermined by a growing amorality. Finally, there was pride in his African background and alienation from it. (Alexander, 1982:17)

Earlier, Bergonzi noted that "one constantly runs up against paradox and even overt contradiction when trying to see Campbell in focus" (1967:136), citing Campbell's representation of himself as "a simple and inarticulate ex-soldier", when in fact he was "a man of wide reading, with a thorough knowledge of several languages and literatures". Campbell's contradictory views on the Spanish poet Lorca, whom he describes as "cowardly" in a note to *Flowering Rifle*, and yet writes about with great admiration in his book *Lorca: An appreciation of his poetry* (1952), are a further instance of his self-contradictory positions (Bergonzi, 1967:136,137). In both of Campbell's autobiographies, *Broken Record* (1934) and *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), he represents himself as a straight talking man of action – a hunter, fighter, adventurer, soldier and womaniser; a man who "roped them [women] in like steers",³⁸ who was famed among Zulu men for his masterful ways, and who would bloody the noses of his sophisticated literary antagonists in England;³⁹ a fate threatened in particular against MacSpaunday (Campbell's composite name for the left-wing poets Louis Macneice, Stephen Spender, W.H. Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis) of the "knife and fork brigade".⁴⁰ Yet, according to Alexander's biography, the contradictions in his aggressive and self-aggrandizing stories show Campbell's autobiographical personae to be "inventions".

identify himself with the roughest and simplest of his fellow-creatures in pub, farm, and bull-ring" (Lewis, 1937:222).

³⁸ This is a description of "Zulu Blades" in Wyndham Lewis' *Apes of God* (cited in Alexander, 1982:24)

³⁹ In 1946, Alexander claims, Campbell and MacNeice "quarrelled and traded light blows, MacNeice actually drawing blood from Campbell's nose, before they made it up very amicably, with Campbell buying MacNeice a drink" (1982:211). Again in a drunken state, Campbell reportedly swung a blow at Stephen Spender at a poetry reading in 1949, and intended to interrupt Spender's reading before Spender could denounce Campbell. The blow was apparently also "light", but made Spender's nose start to bleed immediately. Campbell enjoyed embellishing the reputation he gained from these minor scuffles (Alexander, 1982:214). These antagonisms were usually related to political differences over the Spanish Civil War, with Campbell somewhat absurdly accusing Spender of supporting the communist side for financial gain.

⁴⁰ In a letter to his mother, Campbell commented again with reference to Spender's criticisms of him:

For a disabled British Infantry N.C.O., wearing the King's medals for loyal service, and commended on his discharge sheet for 'excellent military conduct' – to be called a 'coward' by a 'chairborne' shock trooper of the Knife-and-Fork Brigade, one who dug himself in with his eating-irons in the rearguard of both wars ... why to me that seems funny, not annoying. (Alexander, 1982:210)

A further instance is Campbell's varying accounts of his own treatment of the American poet Hart Crane. When Crane stayed with the Campbells in Provence in 1929 he was suicidally depressed. To Enslin du Plessis and David Wright, Campbell explains how they had to rescue Crane several times. Once they found him "sitting at 12 at night in the middle of the road with his typewriter on the one side of him and his portmanteau on the other crying like a baby. Then he tried to jump off the bridge" (letter to Enslin du Plessis, cited in Alexander, 1982:111). In describing the same situation to Wyndham Lewis, Campbell presents himself as brutally evicting Crane from his house (for being homosexual), thereby causing his distress. "I put his typewriter into one of his hands and his valise in the other and gave him a kick behind to get him moving." In re-framing the story in this way, Campbell claims to be championing Lewis, whose writing Crane had criticized. Alexander suggests this is evidence of "his growing habit of representing himself as both tough and ruthless" (1982:112), and fuels a reading of Campbell's hypermasculinist self-representations as a fictional cover-up for an extremely sensitive and isolated nature. Alexander argues that Campbell was in fact an asthmatic child, bookish and artistic rather than physically active, and bad at most of the bloodsports that he claimed were an integral part of his upbringing (1982:6).

The only feminist account of Campbell's autobiographies to date has been Judith Coullie's important psychoanalytic reading of these "paradoxes" in Campbell's second autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951). Coullie argues that "Campbell's autobiographical subject displays the unswerving certainty of the white male conqueror who is portrayed as representing the best of the colonizer's culture." She critiques Campbell's representation of both "reality" and "self" as "independent, discrete, stable and knowable", arguing that "the very fact that Campbell desires, and is able, to construct such an autobiographical subject becomes indicative of the distribution of power in the social formation of the time". She has in mind "patriarchy, colonialism and racism, all of which may be seen structurally to heap confidence and might upon – and to shape the desires of – a white male such as Campbell" (2001:5).

Coullie considers carefully the argument that Campbell invents his autobiographical narrator, citing Laurie Lee's descriptions, in the "Foreword" to *Light on a Dark Horse*, of Campbell's

“arrogant chest-thumping” and “feats of daring and derring-do” (2001:13).⁴¹ With reference to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, she demonstrates that the subject’s entry into language is inherently unstable; thus the presentation of the “stable” narrator-persona demonstrates a hypermasculine compensation for the threat of loss which, for Lacan, characterises entry into the symbolic order. Her conclusion is that this unnaturally stable subject should be read as an example of “gratification through fantasy”, or wish-fulfilment, which nostalgically resurrects a “lost” form of male identity; one which was obsolete by the time of writing:

Campbell is forced to create fictions because the kind of heroic persona which he strives to create, the product of the meshing of specific individual and social histories, was not possible in the material world. The irony is that to create this ideally rational male one who conquers the (irrational) natural world as well as (natural) human irrationality Campbell had to resort to fiction since such a being could exist nowhere else but in his (and his implied readers’) desire. (Coullie, 2001:14)

Campbell did have a socially and economically powerful family behind him, a wealthy and educated elite of doctors, businessmen, sugar barons, politicians, which, in conjunction with his white maleness, lends support to such a reading. But the shift from “fiction” to personal “desire” in this account is perhaps questionable. Campbell complained about the process of writing his autobiographies, and was, in both cases, motivated by financial need (Alexander 1982:133). Alexander tells us that Campbell himself called *Light on a Dark Horse* his “autobuggeroffery” and a “potboiler” (1982:216, 217).⁴² It seems somewhat off the mark then to treat it too seriously as expressing unconscious desires. It might be more fruitful to look into the audience that he is trying to entertain, and for which he is willing to create a version of himself. Both autobiographies are offensively self-aggrandizing and opinionated, but there is also a sense of a performance, if not a joke of sorts, at work in these often unpleasant tales – one of which the author was at least partially conscious. While I would hesitate to argue that Campbell is consciously parodying the self-image he cultivates, it is also the case that his

⁴¹ Coullie considers Lee’s implied “charge of falsification” in his account of the autobiography: “Campbell, the ‘arrogant chest-thumper’ (11), whose ‘inveterate boasting could at times exasperate his friends’ (10), narrates ‘feats of daring and derring-do from which [he] invariably emerges triumphant. Campbell walked tall and he talked tall’(10)”. Coullie then asks: “If Lee is correct (and he is not the only person to accuse Campbell of fabrication), then what are the implications of this for our understanding of the textual constitution of the white male hero?”(2001:13).

⁴² As Alexander puts it:

Even more than *Broken Record*, *Light on a Dark Horse* was the product of imagination. He drew upon his former autobiography, retelling the tales and embroidering them until they bore scarcely any resemblance to the original event. Many of the chapters were so quickly written that in them he threw grammar and syntax to the winds; but others, particularly the chapters about France, he worked at with great care. His narrative method was carefully designed to appear artless – a story leading into a digression, that into another digression, and yet another, in an interwoven maze Laurence Sterne might have admired. He gave himself a heroic role in all the stories, boasting in such a way that not even the most credulous reader would believe him. (Alexander, 1982:217)

off-centre place among the Oxford “dandy” set in 1919 certainly exposed him to this style of self-treatment during his first year in England. Although his education differed from theirs in many ways, he would have been aware of the rich potential for playing with a range of discursive modes, as is evident from his translations and varying poetic modes.⁴³

While their readings are quite different in theme and tone, Coullie and Alexander both foreground the “fictional” aspects of the autobiographies, and share an interest in Campbell’s “psychobiography”, or the generative fantasies that lie behind his literary persona.⁴⁴ In his review of Alexander’s biography, Rowland Smith questions whether this line of argument takes seriously enough Campbell’s historical involvement in the physical exploits of which he boasts in the autobiographies, which are, after all, remarkable. Alexander’s impressive account of Campbell’s life is unable to offer a reading of how its subject understood himself within his range of contexts.⁴⁵

Coullie’s vision of a white, masculinist supremacist willing into being a lost world in which he can be hero also does not quite ring true for me, especially given the mutability of his fantasized heroic personae and their myriad models. Readings which present these personae as “fictionalized” then find themselves in the odd position of perhaps taking too seriously the “psychic” origins of the tales, and, on the other hand, not taking either the literary models, or the verifiable aspects of Campbell’s own life story seriously enough. I do not claim here to be able to “rectify” either of these views of Campbell as a man. What can be added to them, though, is an account which further develops the oral and written literary models for the Campbellian personae, and which suggests how they might work in context.

⁴³ Green suggests that parody was a key *modus operandi* in this milieu, and he associates this with an Eton education in particular, in which, through the practice of translation from the classics, “the arts of imitation and parody were brought to a high pitch ... The tradition of parody at Eton was so refined that the clever boys became very subtle craftsmen in it, almost parodists of parody (1976:121).

⁴⁴ Nicholas Meihuizen (2003) cites Alexander’s entry on Campbell in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* as reiterating this theme of fictionality. Alexander says of *Broken Record* that Campbell “filled it ‘with any adventure he could remember, adapting other people’s anecdotes to his purpose and giving himself a leading role in all of them. [...] [D]istinguishing fact from fiction in it is a major problem’” (Alexander, 2000:111).

⁴⁵ Smith’s early critique of this first biography raises important cautions that still require consideration today:

By placing so much emphasis on Campbell’s divided nature, however, Alexander both unmans him and absolves him from responsibility for his vicious comments on the Spanish Civil War and on the great mass of his hydra-headed enemies. But the texture of his insults, the glee in his visions of violent retribution, are too disturbing simply to be shrugged off. Alexander presents Campbell as a political simpleton whose support for Franco, for example, was an emotional gesture from a dreamer, inept in any practical situation. Yet the attachment to Franco and his nationalist cause is far too lovingly worked into Campbell’s Spanish poetry for his support of that crusade to be simply dismissed. (1984:147)

“Zulu” in London around 1920

In London in the early 1920s, Campbell cultivated a “Zulu” persona for himself, to the extent that this became his nickname among his friends. As Alexander records:

He was a fine raconteur and a superb mimic, with a seemingly endless fund of stories of the African bush. He played up his African ‘wildness’ to good effect, flaunting a strong Natal accent and sprinkling his speech with Zulu words and phrases. As a result, Marie Beerbohm about this time nicknamed him ‘Zulu’, and he appears as ‘Zulu Blades’ in Wyndham Lewis’s satirical novel *The Apes of God*. (1982:22)

Campbell had arrived in London in 1918, and returned to South Africa in May 1924 for a period of two years. His original intention was to enter Oxford, but he failed the Greek entrance requirement. However, his time in Oxford was immensely productive; he read widely, and met a number of modernist writers and artists, such as the Sitwells, Wyndham Lewis, Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock), Robert Graves, Louis Golding, Aldous Huxley, Russell Green, and Edgell Rickword, through his friendships with two fellow students, the composer William Walton and critic T.W. Earp. Later in these early years in London he would meet an important friend, the artist Augustus John, as well as the poet and critic T.S. Eliot; and during his early months of living with the sisters Mary and Kathleen Garman, he became a rival to both their suitors, the composer Bernard van Dieren, in the case of Mary, and Kathleen’s lover, subsequently her husband, the sculptor Jacob Epstein.⁴⁶ Apart from a period of working and travelling in France in 1920-1921, and a sojourn in a barn in Wales following his marriage to Mary in 1922, where they lived like “hippies” and Mary bore their

⁴⁶ Cressida Connolly’s account of the Garman family, *The Rare and the Beautiful: the Lives of the Garmans*, pays particular attention to Kathleen as a strong-minded personality who raised a family of illegitimate children as Epstein’s mistress, unperturbed by social sanction, while Epstein continued to live with his first wife until her death. Kathleen later became Lady Epstein. Connolly’s “group portrait” of the family sheds light on why Mary and Roy would have been so well suited to one another; the family members she depicts shared a “high-minded” devotion to art and literature (at the expense of personal fortune and comfort), a zest for life and a taste for melodramatic gestures:

She (Kathleen) and her eight brothers and sisters had been a most unusual family. They valued naturalness very highly, they barely disciplined their children, they spoke their minds. [...] People fell in love with them. They were lovely to be in love with – passionate, generous, beautiful. They sent secret notes at midnight, and left the pillows smelling of scent. They gave presents: books of poetry, music, wild flowers. They made dramatic entrances and exits, their arms full of lilies, haunting railway stations throughout Europe, intoxicating their lovers with sudden meetings and long goodbyes. [...] They sought adventure, emotional altitude. Colour mattered. Their letters are full of it [...] To understand the Garmans, it is necessary to see that this world of colour and intensity stood in sharp contrast to the dark, industrial region that they came from, in the shadow of the First World War” (2004:1,2).

The family was from a town named Walsall in the West Midlands, reputed to be one of the ugliest towns on earth according to Connolly. Among the lovers of the Garman siblings were a number of other well-known figures in the art world of the day besides Epstein and Campbell, notably the poet Laurie Lee and the painter Lucian Freud, both of whom were lovers of Lorna Garman, as well as Peggy Guggenheim, the art critic and collector who had a long-term love affair with Douglas Garman. Mary herself was a painter, Kathleen a pianist of “professional” ability, and a collector of art. In her later life, she set up the Garman-Ryan collection in Walsall.

first child, Teresa, most of this period was spent in London. In Oxford, Campbell was part of a literary club, “The Jolly Farmers”, which met at a pub of that name to read literature of all kinds, and which included A.E.Coppard, and Edgell Rickword among others. Under Earp’s influence, Campbell had been “temporarily converted” to “a Marxist hatred of the ‘bourgeois’. [...] His anarchic spirit also made him a supporter of Sinn Fein”, and for a period he expounded the principles of Futurism (Alexander, 1982:23). His encounters with political movements and views of the day, as well as modern art and literary movements were key to his education as an emerging poet. As he explained to his father in a letter:

We accept *Wheels* [a poetry journal run by the Sitwells as an alternative to the Marsh school of “Georgian” poetry] as a necessary but badly-written hypothesis on which to work our theorems. We apply our work closely to the life that goes on around us. We read the French symbolists, modern futurists, the Elizabethans, the modern scientists, the Roman poets and as much as we can of the Greeks. No one can say we are not as widely read as any of the Georgians or Futurists, most of whom turn their backs on science. I have now read about three-quarters of Darwin and Freud, a good deal of Huxley, and seven volumes of Nietzsche. (cited in Alexander, 1982:25)

It was in this energized post-War bohemia that Campbell cultivated his “outsider” image. Alexander reports that “he would strap the baby Teresa to his back in a blanket, Zulu-style” and walk through the crowds of London, “wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat and a scarlet bandanna” (1982:41). He was also renowned for reciting Zulu songs and war-dances in the literary pub gatherings. Lewis’ portrait of Campbell in *The Apes of God* describes him as follows:

Blades was the ‘black beast’, an evil neighbour: what with his upstart disrespect for his metropolitan betters, since he had brought the hearty habits of the African out-stations into their midst, here. His skill with women was natural, it was true he roped them in like steers, he must be working off ten years’ solitary confinement in the Veldt. (cited in Alexander, 1982:24)

Campbell’s performance of Zulu male identity had an earnest precedent from Natal colonial history, and notably from within his own family. David Bunn describes how Campbell’s uncle, William Alfred Campbell, the managing director of the Natal Estates sugar plantation, had invested himself in Zulu national identity. As Bunn argues:

...people like William Alfred Campbell imagined *themselves* part of a tribal community. Nostalgia for the class semiotics of the British aristocracy became propped upon a fantasy of being a white Zulu chief, and supporting the threatened power of *amakhosi*. [...] Campbell believed absolutely in his ability to study, master and conserve the Zulu past. People like him feared that the pageantry of the Zulu past (which they imagined, essentially, in terms of regimental warfare) was in danger of being undermined by proletarianization, and saw themselves as crucial custodians of a dying heroic tradition. (1996:45)

Bunn traces the “compensatory” impulse behind William Alfred Campbell’s desire to establish pristine bush reserve areas, to “compensate for the ruined scenery of Natal Estates” (1996:44). Similarly, the social devastation wrought by the labour system on mines and sugar plantations is compensated by this investment in Zulu “tradition”. As Bunn comments further, “the staging of Zulu or Shangaan maleness provides a dramatic context in which the dreary logic of the Natal Estates boardroom is shed, and more authentic, more directly masculine affinities between executives and their younger protégés are rehearsed. The bond between trackers and hunters becomes a model for ‘instinctual’ loyalties elsewhere” (1996:48). In this instance, William Campbell participated in a tradition with its roots in nineteenth century colonialism in which white colonial figures come to regard themselves as custodians of “primitive” tradition, and indeed (like T.E. Lawrence in Said’s reading) its most significant and respected representatives.

While Roy Campbell’s affectation of a Zulu identity in London would have been crucially shaped by the white Natalian notion of colonial “custodianship” of tribal value, it differs from this tradition in some important ways. It could be seen to offer “compensation” and relief from a different kind of stuffiness encountered in the post-War London literary scene. In this, it is in keeping with the self-representations of the “Children of the Sun”, and particularly the emerging new generation of dandies, for whom self-performance constituted a direct challenge to the establishment fathers, and its expectations of the trajectory for the young, educated heirs to English patriarchal authority. The delight, and at times awe, with which his performance was received by his bohemian London set is evident in Wyndham Lewis’s account of the Campbell wedding party at the Harlequin restaurant in Beak Street, in February 1922. According to Lewis, the married couple had left the party for their room above the restaurant, when a quarrel broke out between the artists Jacob Kramer and Augustus John, with Kramer showing John “his left bicep”, which “went on moving about under his sleeve”. Campbell soon turned up in his pyjamas. Lewis describes the end of the scene as follows:

‘Look. Could I throw you out of that window if I wanted to Jacob?’

‘Yes, Roy, you could,’ said Kramer humbly. ‘You could, Roy.’

‘You know I could, Jacob?’

‘I know you could Roy.’ Kramer nodded his head, his eyes screwed up.

‘Well then let my guests alone Jacob. You let my guests alone. Don’t let me hear you’ve interfered with John again. Mind I’m only just upstairs Jacob. I’ll come down to you!’

A strangled protest and assent at once came from Kramer; and stiffly and slowly, his shoulders drawn up, his head thrust out in apache bellicosity, Campbell withdrew, all of us completely silent. (Lewis, 1937:224)

The reference to Campbell's "apache bellicosity" is a variant on the Zulu theme; in this context its impact is of course that of a generic primitivist stance, rather than the cultivated storehouse of ritual and cultural conservation which Bunn points to in the case of William Alfred Campbell, although the effects of the "masquerade" may at times be similar. That it is a show-stopper is evident from the "completely silent" wedding party.

Further elements of Campbell's "equestrian" community

By the 1930s, once his affinities for Spanish literature and life were firmly established, Campbell favoured a comparison between himself and the Renaissance "soldier-poets" of Iberia, Miguel de Cervantes and Luis de Camões. With reference to these figures, Campbell developed an image of himself as a comrade of the working and fighting men of the world – on fishing boats, in the bull-ring, in pubs throughout Provence, Spain and England – as opposed to the drawing rooms and literary salons of post-war Europe. He uses the comparison further to evolve a theory of language as indistinguishable from "action". This theory could be read as a defensive anti-intellectualism; an effort to redeem a failed academic career, in favour of an education by the "university of life". But it could also be read poetically, as a genuine description of the affinity he sees between verbal and physical expression; an affinity that Campbell might trace back to the dramatic poetry of the Renaissance.⁴⁷ His comments on these dramatists in an early letter show his sincere literary valuation of a raw and vivid dramatic language as opposed to a more reflective or refined one, which he would associate with academies and literary coteries. In 1925 he wrote to Edward Roworth that he and Mary had acquired a collection of Elizabethan plays from the Durban library, and were spending the week reading them aloud to one another:

⁴⁷ Campbell gives a sense of his literary tastes in his early years at Oxford in *Broken Record* (1934). He describes the reading he did with his Oxford group, The Jolly Farmers, as follows :

I was all for the Elizabethans: but we read Otway and even Beddoes... I remember laughing until it became almost agony and paralysis, over some of the scenes in Thomas Heywood's farce of Lucrece, notably the scenes of Valerius and the clown. Sometimes it would end in a rough-house... Never before, or since, have I done such an amount of reading as I did at Oxford ... I always had a preference for the language as spoken in Elizabethan times, but I read almost the whole of the English drama. The novel as a form bores me. ... The drama is a different matter – it is people talking. All the inessential things in a novel – description, explanation, etc. that take up so much room and time – are absent from good drama. ... There are only a few novels which are readable in the sense that good plays are – *Don Quixote*, *Pantagruel*, *Gulliver*, *Dead Souls*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *War and Peace*, *The Childermass*, Boswell's *Johnson*, and the comic parts of Dickens, Smollett and Fielding. (CW III, 1988:89,90)

By Jove they are marvellous poets: we have been reading Dekker's "Old Fortunatus" which is full of enough poetry to set up half a dozen modern poets, although the play itself is a disjointed sort of affair. [...]

Their poetry is so living and fresh it makes even the greatest work of Keats and Shelley seem just a little bit artificial - though one acknowledges their superiority.

When you come back you'll find us ranting long passages of bombast and fire.

'See, a diamond, that would have bought Lollia Polina,

When she came in like starlight, hid with jewels!'

That's the stuff to give them. I'm absolutely drunk with these fellows. They wrote poetry just as a machine gun fires off bullets. They couldn't stop writing it. They don't even stop to get their breath. They go thundering on until you forget everything about the sense and (especially with Chapman) end up in a positive debauch of thunder and splendour and music.

Everything that disparaging critics say about the Elizabethans may be true. They are raw, careless, headstrong, coarse, brutal. But how vivid they are, how intoxicated with their own imagination and their sudden newly-found mastery over a yet unexploited language. For three years I have been reading the Russians hard and the modern French, but this is like having a wild Saturday night after a week of Sundays. (SANL MSB 76, Box 1, Letter 1, pages 2 & 3)

This enthusiastic commentary, along with the citation from an absurd seduction scene in Ben Jonson's comedy *Volpone*, in which the eponymous protagonist first attempts to purchase the love of the beautiful Celia with priceless jewels, and then threatens rape when she demurs, speaks to Campbell's taste for melodrama, grandstanding and posturing, as well as to his particular brand of humour which draws on Renaissance notions of wit and comedy. As will be discussed further in chapter 2, he would later (in 1929) come to defend Wyndham Lewis as a modern Ben Jonson; an image which the acting editor of the *The New Statesmen*, Ellis Roberts, vehemently disputed. The letter to Roworth cited above further suggests that Campbell's own gestures are partially modelled on his sense of Elizabethan dramatic poetry – as he warns, Ned will find himself and Mary "ranting long passages of bombast and fire". Ned Roworth, along with Maurice Webb, the backer of *Voorslag* magazine, would shortly find himself subject to the full force of Campbell's rhetorical powers in the climax surrounding the crisis of *Voorslag*, which is discussed in detail in chapter 2.

The poetic/colonial self as "Outsider"

In *Broken Record* (1934) Campbell describes himself as an outsider in both space and time:

The only value my impression of Europe can have for the general reader is that of an outside critic. Take me for the inhabitant of another planet and you may see this value.

[...]

I am presenting an outsider's point of view: you may take it as that of the pre-Victorian man, or of a pagan who never was put through any mill except that of the pre-industrial

European culture of an equestrian, slightly feudal type, a sort of inhabitant of the moon, a foreign being who cannot imagine what meaning such words as 'rights', 'progress', 'freedom' and 'liberty' have at all.... (CW III, 1988:130, 131)

This description lays claim to a “pre-industrial” European tradition of a “feudal type”, but reconfigures this distance in time as a spatial one, by setting himself up as “the inhabitant of another planet”, or “a foreign being”. Such strangeness, or perspectival distance, has no real cultural content, and works against the sense of settled values associated with the “feudal” worldview, while laying claim to the relatively unconstrained point of view of the outsider, free of social obligation. Campbell’s insistence on the value of this “outsider’s” perspective modifies his “feudal” perspectives in crucial ways, as I hope will become clearer over the course of this chapter.

Bernard Bergonzi places Campbell squarely in a tradition of modernism which refers to the feudal, arguing that Campbell’s “rejection of the values of urban, democratic society broadly parallels that of other modern writers” (1967:135). He cites Geoffrey Wagner’s claim that:

Lawrence, Yeats and Campbell were all men who hungered for the human relationship in an increasingly urbanized society. Yeats loved aristocrat and peasant, while *Broken Record* is a *cri du Coeur* for the feudal relationship of serf to lord, working inside which the poet could so manipulate mythology. (Geoffrey Wagner, cited in Bergonzi, 1967:135).

Campbell’s attachment to the feudal was life-long and earnest, and expressed itself in his equestrian poetic themes, as well as in his attachment to provincial ritual and myth, such as bullfighting (see chapter 5). Moreover, as Bergonzi argues, by contrast to Wyndham Lewis’ shifting positions, Campbell was “massively single-minded” in his political views, and in particular his support for Franco and his hatred of communism, to the extent that after the Yalta agreement he claimed he had thrown away his British and American medals “in protest against the betrayal of eastern Europe to Russia; at a public occasion connected with the Festival of Britain in 1951 he wore only his Spanish Nationalist medals, saying they were the only decorations he could wear without a sense of shame” (Bergonzi, 1967:143). Campbell’s denigration of contemporary democratic principles, and attachment to his own peculiar brand of a quasi-feudal, quasi-military social order was indeed firm and single-minded. His enlistment to the side of the Allies in World War II against the fascism that he had, in Spain, identified with the religious and feudal values he held dear might then be seen as a further paradoxical act. But his political “views” have a curious status. As Bergonzi puts it:

[I]f Campbell's reactionary nostalgia and hatred for the contemporary world were by no means unique (they can be traced at least as far back as Carlyle), there was something very personal about his mode of expression. (Bergonzi, 1967:135,136)

Campbell's view of himself in society presents a further "paradox": it is clear that his entry into this apparently rigid feudal mythology requires a modernist, and profoundly literary, process of both poetic- and self-invention. The poetic fragment that forms the first epigraph to this chapter reveals this conundrum: in it, the poet leaves in his wake the trail of "dead selves" which become the "stepping stones" on which the autobiographical and poetic speaking voice arrives. There is a striking tension in this image between the "petrification" of the speaker's experience into a concrete, unyielding, impenetrable stony essence, and the contrasting mobility of the poetic and autobiographical "I", moving, like water, over the abandoned "dead selves". The image suggests that the poet's speaking personae may temporarily adopt solid, or stable identities,⁴⁸ but that these are time-bound and liable to be discarded. The poetic voice itself, as I will show in the discussion of the *Adamastor* poems in chapter 4, is mobile in a mode which critics associate with the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, who had a formative and enduring influence on Campbell's writing.⁴⁹ This odd poetic fragment, which Akerman found in a late notebook of Campbell's in the Killie Campbell library, serves as epigraph to his play, *Dark Outsider*. It is apt to the play in that it foregrounds Campbell's consciousness of the tension between his "petrified" public "selves" which become the subject of his "fame", and the ineffable poetic voice which runs lightly over them.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ I am indebted to Mikki Flockemann for her insightful comments on this image.

⁴⁹ Both of Campbell's daughters confirm that Baudelaire was Campbell's lifelong favourite poet. Teresa Campbell cites a note in which he says of his translations of Baudelaire "Having had considerable success with my translation of a Saint, St. John of the Cross, I determined to translate a fellow-sinner who is hardly less a believer ... I have been reading Baudelaire since I was fifteen, carried him in my haversack through two wars, and loved him longer and more deeply than any other poet." (2011:277). The significance of Baudelaire for Campbell's imaginative scope will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 in particular, which will consider the influence of "the Baudelairean discovery of psychic mobility, of unanchored identity" (Bersani, 1977:2) on Campbell.

⁵⁰ While this fragment is from the 1950s, his 1930s biography, *Broken Record*, opens with a jocular account of a similar thematic. He describes his "many deaths at the hands of other writers" – thinking of his representation as the suicidal Theo Bissaker in Sarah Gertrude Millin's *An Artist in the Family* (note 2, *CW III*, 1988:604), as well as the death of Rob McPhail in a bullfight in Wyndham Lewis's *Snooty Baronet*. But his comment on these deaths uses the same imagery as that in the poem above (also repeated in *Talking Bronco*): "If it were true that men may rise upon the stepping stones of their dead selves to better things, I should be in the seventh heaven by now, instead of trying to haul my past out of the stable backwards by its tail, like a recalcitrant cow, and driving it to the market, where it has been more profitably sold so many times before, by others" (*CW III*, 1988:77).

The limits of biography

Before turning to *Dark Outsider* itself, as the text which, in my view, opens up the interesting problem of liberation and entrapment that attends Campbell's performance of himself as "exotic" in the London literary scene of the 1920s, I want to turn briefly to a third reading of Campbell's autobiographical personae; a reading which shares elements with others, but in my view comes a little closer to the mark.

In an essay which considers both autobiographies, Nicholas Meihuizen argues that the speaking personae are neither efforts at a "stable" heroic identity nor entirely a fictive "masquerade". Instead, he suggests, they do not begin to approach the deepest sources of Campbell's self, but rather protect it from scrutiny by flagging their own internal contradictions. In other words, they constitute a conscious textual ruse of sorts. He points out that in *Broken Record* (1934) Campbell alerts the reader to the fictive nature of the text:

[Campbell's] concern about his reality being recast by writerly design and our being free to take his words with a pinch of salt [...] points to something other than what is immediately apparent in his accounts of his life. (2003:199)

Based on a brief account of recent theories of autobiography by Georges Gusdorf, Barrett Mandel, Michael Sprinker and others, Meihuizen argues that Campbell's own comment on the fictional component of his work "chimes with numerous views expressed by various scholars, critics and writers of autobiography" (2003:197). Drawing on this body of work, Meihuizen analyzes a particular anecdote concerning the killing of a Javan deer which recurs in both autobiographies but which "diverges in its concluding statement" (2003:199).

The story is of a hunt in Natal in which Campbell, unarmed, confronts a wounded Javan deer in a river. He kills the deer by wrapping his arms around its neck and drowning it. In *Broken Record*, the anecdote concludes with the words:

In the end he drowned just at the moment when I began to feel a real affection for him. A truly taurobolic and Mithraic sensation. I never killed another animal since then. (Campbell, 1934:66-67. Cited in Meihuizen, 2003:199)

In *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), however, written nearly 20 years later, the concluding argument is very different:

I lost interest in hunting with guns as being too dull, having experienced the hand to hand stuff. I have often before and since then gone in to a wounded bushbuck and fought it out with a knobkerrie. (Campbell, 1951:66. Cited in Meihuizen, 2003:199)

With reference to Mandel's work in particular, Meihuizen proposes the following reading:

The contradictory concluding statements of the Javan deer incident, taken together, make us sense the lie. They form an impasse, a blockage to do with a conflict among what Mandel calls the deeper assumptions underlying conscious knowledge of oneself (1980:68). We can posit two sets of assumptions linked to the incident: a tough, manly set, and a gentle sensitive one. The manly assumptions, apart from reflecting his own needs, seem to be based on what Campbell considers the world wants of him as a colonial enthusiast, committed to intensely lived experience [...]. According to J.M. Coetzee, confession is intimately involved with the need to arrive at essential truth about the self (1992:252), and perhaps the near inchoate strategy embedded in the confluence of autobiographies can be read as Campbellian confession, where Campbell actually wants us to glimpse a complex truth about himself, a truth not limited by the simplifying mask that he usually shows to his friends, and dependent on both (albeit contradictory; more, even necessarily contradictory) versions. (Meihuizen, 2003:200, 201)

The argument that the two very different conclusions to the story point less to fictive invention, but more startlingly, "make us sense the lie", is compelling. Meihuizen proposes that this is a conscious authorial move, and that behind it lies Campbell's intention in his autobiographies "to reveal the bundle of contradictions that makes up the man..." (2003:201). In this reading, "the two versions in concert help create a barrier of contradiction around an area of Campbell's thought that he needed to shield from the world's and perhaps from his own disturbed gaze" (2003:203). Where I perhaps diverge from Meihuizen, is in his cautious speculation that this "area" of thought relates particularly to Mary, as the centre and focus of his full range of passions and anxieties. While there is no doubt that his temporary separation from Mary in 1927 shook him deeply, I suggest that "this area of thought" also involves broader modernist questions of value, which include his relationship, as a South African "outsider", to the English literary world in which he and Mary met.

It is striking, if perhaps not quite coincidental, that Anthony Akerman's play, *Dark Outsider* (2000), also draws on the tales of the Javan deer for an important climactic scene; one which relates to the Campbells' marital "crisis" in Kent. Akerman's play could be seen to dramatize the point that Meihuizen wishes to explore, which is that Campbell's claim to "hypermasculinity" is neither a fantasized heroism, nor a "mask" for a sensitive nature but rather a strategic self-invention – one that reveals little about Campbell's "interiority", but demonstrates the uses to which he puts the narrative material at his disposal. Sprinker's comments on Nietzsche, cited in Meihuizen's discussion, seem apt here:

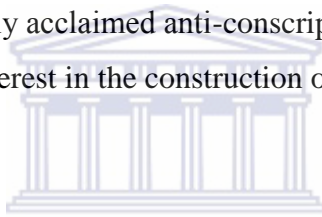
If autobiography can be described as the self's inquiry into its own history – the self-conscious questioning of a subject by itself – then Nietzsche offers the most fearful

warning for any autobiographical text: ‘The danger of the direct questioning of the subject *about* the subject and of all self-reflection of the spirit lies in this, that it could be useful and important for one’s activity to interpret oneself *falsely*’. (1980:334. Cited in Meihuizen, 2003:198)

For the purposes of my argument, the “falseness” of Campbell’s self-interpretation cannot be tested. But its “usefulness” can be seen at work in Akerman’s text.

Dark Outsider

Dark Outsider was written in 1991, and produced in 1995 at the Grahamstown Festival. It was published in a volume of the same title by Witwatersrand University Press in 2000, along with two other plays, *A Man Out of the Country* and *Old Boys*. As Lesley Marx points out in her introduction to the published collection, Akerman has been praised both for “the crafting of his plays” as well as “for his ability to discover and recover fresh stories for a post-apartheid South Africa” (2000:ix). What the three plays have in common with one another, as well as with Akerman’s first highly acclaimed anti-conscription play, *Somewhere on the Border* (1983),⁵¹ is an explicit interest in the construction of white South African masculinity.⁵²



Akerman’s interest in Roy Campbell began at school in Michaelhouse, where he studied Campbell’s poems as part of the national curriculum, and took pleasure in them. The well-known short lyrics, “The Zebras”, “The Serf” and “The Zulu Girl”, he notes, “were about us, were set in South Africa” (2004:643), and seemed “robust”, compared to English romantic poetry. Akerman himself was living in exile in Holland when he read Alexander’s biography of Campbell, his most important source, and Laurie Lee’s *As I Walked Out One Midsummer’s Morning*. He comments that he was “touched” by Lee’s description of Campbell’s “expatriate heart” (2004:643). The material for *Dark Outsider* was finally organized around what Peter Alexander represents as the central conflict for Campbell; namely between his love for Mary, who could not live in South Africa, and his love for his homeland.

⁵¹ *Somewhere on the Border* has undergone a recent revival. It was performed at the National Literary Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 2011, and in 2012 at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. It is also currently taught in the first year English course at the University of Cape Town.

⁵² Mieke Kolk cites Akerman’s description of his first play as “a dramatic essay on the white male psyche” (2009:200). She makes the connection between Campbell’s performance of himself, and that of “Tayeb Salih’s black hero Mustafa Sa’eed who performs ‘the beast in the jungle’ calling himself a yes/no Othello. (Black is African is Sudan).” This Kolk associates with “excessive mimicry” of metropolitan stereotypes of the African (2009:201). She is interested in the correspondences for both protagonists between their sense of masculine identity and their migrancy – specifically their displacement from African soil.

Dark Outsider deploys the Campbellian “tall tale” in climactic ways. It opens with Roy telling an apocryphal story of how he showed Mary who “wore the pants” in their relationship by hanging her out of a window by her feet. Later in the scene, Mary makes sure that William (Plomer), the audience of Roy’s tale, understands that her husband is given to “embellishment”. It is soon clear that this habit of “embellishment” is profoundly the key weapon of a poet. The Javan deer story, embellished in ways we can never determine, dramatizes the way in which the hypermasculine Campbellian persona rises warmly under threat from a different kind of specifically aristocratic English heartlessness – embodied in the “villainous” figure of Vita Sackville-West.

Akerman, like Meihuizen, draws on the struggle with the Javan deer to mark Roy’s rising anxiety over his relationship with Mary. It is remarkable that Meihuizen shows no sign of having read the Akerman play; both writers draw on this particular “tale” as a powerful source independently of one another, based on their readings of the autobiographies. The unfolding of this scene suggests that there is more than mere sexual anxiety or jealousy at work – the sexual insecurity mirrors a broader and deeper problem of value and values, both literary and social.

The framing scene is a deeply uncomfortable dinner party involving Mary, Roy, Vita and her husband Harold Nicolson, and the critic and editor of *The New Statesman*, Desmond MacCarthy.⁵³ Vita’s snobbishness and her sense of the world as her playground is wryly glossed by Harold, who points out, fondly, that her race and class-based opinion is a liability to his work in the Foreign Office. In this dialogue, Vita dismisses South Africa as undesirable, foreigners as unfathomable and badly bred, and love as a diversion in a life of leisure.

DESMOND: And what ought one to make of Il Duce and his Black Shirts?

VITA: I know it’s harder to tell with foreigners, but one does find him so dreadfully common.

HAROLD: Vita’s pronouncements do tend to ruffle feathers at the Foreign Office.

Things became rather awkward for me in Persia after she had referred to the Shah as a Cossack trooper.

⁵³ MacCarthy was supportive of Campbell throughout his life, and receives only a mild and fond lambasting in *The Georgiad*. MacCarthy had positively reviewed both *The Flaming Terrapin* and the *Adamastor* collections, and published some of Campbell’s own reviews in *The New Statesman*. Campbell’s relationship with the magazine broke down after it failed to publish his review of Wyndham Lewis’ *The Apes of God*, but this was while it was briefly under the editorial control of Ellis Roberts, who is dealt with mercilessly in *The Georgiad*, as discussed in more detail in chapter 2. It was also MacCarthy who arranged Campbell’s broadcasting job at the BBC in the late 1940s, thus saving him from total penury following the war.

VITA: Really Hadji, our spaniel has a longer pedigree.

HAROLD: Yet it's not in the nature of diplomacy to call attention to such failings.

MARY: Persia must be dreadfully interesting.

VITA: Have you travelled abroad much, Mary?

MARY: We've just spent two years in South Africa.

Pause

VITA: Dada fought in the South African War. Quite frankly it escapes me why anyone should *want* South Africa.

ROY: Unless you were born there.

Pause

VITA: Yes, that misfortune I hadn't considered.

In this moment, Roy names nationality as the central division between them. Vita's response that it is a "misfortune" to be born in South Africa requires a rebuttal which alters the mode of exchange – languid and opinionated dinner party conversation is not home ground for Roy. War has been declared, and he enters it using as his weapon his purported education among the warrior race of the South:

ROY: I grew up among the Zulus. They are a race of aristocrats, who were conquered by a nation of grocers. The Zulus have only one art – conversation. But *their* conversation is always worth listening to.

A strained pause.

HAROLD: I say, Campbell, what did you read when you were up at Oxford?

ROY: Books.

A beat. VITA allows this to pass for wit and defuses the situation by starting the laughter: ROY drains his glass. As he gets into his stride, he moves away from the table and towards the audience.

At the age of eleven I could bring down a charging buck with a single shot and knew most of the answers in the bush. When I was last out in Natal a drive was arranged of those big Javan deer, about the size of a water-buck. At the beginning of this drive I saw a large stag weighing about four hundred pounds running towards me in a stream. This is a true story. It had a dog dangling on its horns, still half alive. I took aim and drew two blank clicks at its head. Umnugeni, my beater, had forgotten to reload my shot-gun. I was so furious I threw the twenty-guinea gun into the trees, took a stick from one of the beaters and leaped into the stream to intercept it. I came straight at him and unhooked the dog off his horn. He dived at me and caught me by the left armpit in the fork of his horn while I crashed him over the hump with my stick. I was under the water, but I got his nose with my teeth, held my breath and put up my arm so as to get the leverage on the top of his horn. I pulled it towards me, and as it came down, I came up out of the water. I got my hands crossed over his horns. One of his antlers was through my sleeve and he jerked me furiously. But gradually his head came down, his muzzle went into the water and great gasping bubbles came up.

The Native beaters and Umnugeni all stood round in a circle and watched this. Then they composed a song about it on the spot.

ROY *sings a praise-song in Zulu and performs a Zulu dance.* (Akerman, 2000: Act 1, Part 2, Scene 1)

The tale of unarmed combat with the Javan deer wrests the centre-stage away from Vita's barrage of opinion. The action on stage, in which Roy turns away from the dinner table and conjures up a different scene through story-telling, effectively eclipses the world of the Sevenoakians, and counters it with an African world of forests, animals, and primal struggle. As Lesley Marx puts it in her "Introduction" to the play:

Her [Vita's] monumental insensitivity provokes Campbell's counterattack: a variation on the suspended moments provided by the renditions of poetry. Roy moves from the table towards the audience and, in a surreal, Shepardian moment counteracts the brittle superficiality of the Sevenoakians with a story of Africa. As with Sam Shepard's monologues, this one uses storytelling to create a self. Roy's story is a formal disruption that asserts a different world from that in which he finds himself at the dinner table: the story tells of nature, action and heroic masculinity in the landscape of Africa. The praise song and the dance that close the scene also foreground oral traditions and the celebration of the body in relation to heroic action, not to what Campbell will criticise as perverse sexuality. (Marx, 2000:xix)

The Javan deer here is sacrificed again in a climactic moment of "self-making". As Marx points out, however, the risk is that of re-essentialising Africa as a place of thoughtless bodily action. In telling this story, Campbell is living up to the early labels by which he established his reputation in London – as the boorish outsider, the "Zulu", the poet who could "rope women in like steers" with his backveldt ways. He thus both simultaneously liberates and entraps himself by exploiting his "legend" in this way – a legend whose ambiguous status depends on the context of its articulation.

Akerman's formulation of the scene further draws attention to the struggle over the meaning of the word "aristocrat". Where the dinner party exchange foregrounds Vita's sense of aristocracy as "pedigree", Campbell counters this with his own Nietzschean definition of the term as meaning "superiority", particularly of an artistic kind, by stating that the Zulus are "a race of aristocrats who were conquered by a nation of grocers." Directly addressing the hunting story to the audience, rather than the on-stage characters, could be taken as a demonstration of Roy's point, allowing the theatre audience to confirm the claim through their own experience of his oratory. The dramatic impact of the tale points to the audience's, or reader's, complicity in consuming this moment of heroic self-making, which is indeed a welcome relief from the stiff and awkward scene in which it is set. Roy, though, is also the main protagonist of his tale, fêted by a chorus of Zulu "aristocrats", who defer to both his oratorical and physical skill. Thus he establishes his own (poetic and dramatic) aristocracy at this moment, over both the "noble" Zulu and the weighty and ancient Sackville-West lineage.

Akerman's play sanctions Campbell's narrative revenge here, by setting it in the context of a double humiliation by Vita, who demeans him both as a loutish colonial, and as failed man – for this is also the scene in which Mary begins to fall in love with her hostess. Akerman's framing neatly suggests the continuity between the terms on which Campbell made his name in England in the early 1920s as the "Zulu" poet, and the humiliating terms on which he left it in 1927 as the boorish and uneducated outsider, without the finesse to retain the interest of his free-thinking and graceful English wife, or to maintain a place in her preferred social milieu. Peter Alexander reports that following Mary's revelation of her affair with Vita, Campbell sought comfort in a London pub, where he met CS Lewis, and shared his troubles over a beer. The story goes that Lewis' tactless response was "fancy being cuckolded by a woman" (Alexander, 1982:83).⁵⁴ But Vita Sackville-West was not just any woman. She represented the full weight of English literary and social history, and placed herself at the centre of its contemporary trends, notably the Bloomsbury circle of writers and artists. Campbell himself had acknowledged the power of Vita's "pedigree", her sense of which Akerman captures so neatly in the scene cited above. When the historical Campbells first moved to the cottage at Long Barn, Roy Campbell was jubilant that he and Mary were so close to Knole, the Sackville-West ancestral home where, as he told his friend and benefactor CJ Sibbett in a letter, some of his favourite writers such as Pope and Dryden had done much of their work.⁵⁵ Mary's betrayal of Roy is literary as much as it is sexual – she has left the outsider backwater poet and moved into Vita's glow, the sun at the centre of the contemporary literary scene, wielding ancestral, social and literary authority.

⁵⁴ In Alexander's reconstruction of the scene, it is this comment that sent Roy into a blind rage following Mary's revelation of her affair with Vita:

The uncharacteristically tactless remark seared itself into Campbell's mind. He was an intensely proud man; the thought of being the butt of innumerable Bloomsbury jokes was unbearable to him. The carefully constructed public image of himself as the powerful 'Zulu', drinking, fighting, and womanizing, would be turned devastatingly against him. He flung out of the pub and went back to Weald in a black rage... (1982:83,84)

⁵⁵ In the letter, Campbell writes:

We are on the estate of Knole Palace; and we have the run of Knole Park which is a fine big forest full of deer. The Hon. Mrs Nicolson who has fixed us up here is Vita Sackville-West ... She is the daughter of Lord Sackville who owns Knole. At Knole is the place where Dryden, Pope, Otway and many of my favourite authors used to spend most of their time. It is full of Reynoldses and Gainsboroughs and it is a magnificent building dating from the fourteenth century. It has nearly 400 rooms and the biggest private library I have ever seen. We are in a house that used to be used for the servants. Vita Nicolson's house is next to ours. It is also an interesting place. Caxton was born there and it is as old if not older than Knole itself. (Letter to CJ Sibbett, October 1927. Cited in Pearce, 2001:83)

Being emblematic of literary and ancestral Englishness in this way, makes Vita the charming, aristocratic, androgynous poet-hero⁵⁶ of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), which was written during the months of Vita and Mary's affair.⁵⁷ Orlando is also carefree, self-centred and callous. As Woolf perceives, Vita herself is "heartless" – she has no need of mere human attachments; for her love, like travel, is a form of entertainment. Akerman's play suggests that Roy introduces and then employs his multifaceted hypermasculine persona both to perform for, and to assert his difference from this English literary scene. As Marx points out, it is in Roy's "attempt to define his own masculinity as African" that he distinguishes himself from a world of value that he cannot accept. And in this way, through his "true story", he changes the subject back to himself.

The struggle over value here is illustrated in the second epigraph to this chapter, taken from the final scene of the play. Here Uys Krige cites, in memoriam, Campbell's beautiful poem, "Tristan da Cunha", in which the isolated island in the South Atlantic comes to stand for the poet-speaker's sense of separation from his "race". This earns him Vita's scorn for his sentimental colonial nostalgia. For the Vita of Akerman's play, the Campbells are a passing entertainment; and her affair with Mary simply another of her "muddles", as her husband Harold terms them. This exchange suggests that Roy, or Uys for that matter, can never escape the designation of "colonial". Implicitly the value of their poetry is thrown into question as expressing a peripheral and therefore denigrated world view – which is, of course, precisely Campbell's poetic theme. Akerman sets Vita's lofty scorn against the sustained metaphor in "Tristan da Cunha" for poetic isolation, and the failure of meaningful communication for the cast out and cast away poetic speaker.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Vita, like Roy, was of course also "flamboyant" in her androgynous and outrageous dress style, wearing striking combinations of colours and richly textured garments. So was Mary, according to Victoria Glendinning, Vita's biographer:

She herself was dark and boyish; she painted and played the guitar, and wore romantic clothes – velvet cloaks and breeches in black and red. Augustus John, Roy's drinking companion, called her 'Little Lord Fondleroy'. Childlike, she found in Vita more than a lover. She called Vita her St Anne, her Demeter, lover, mother, 'everything in women that I most need and love'. (1983:180)

⁵⁷ Their love affair began in September 1927, and seems to have come to an end in May 1928, when Mary finally left for Provence to join Roy. *Orlando* was published on the 11 October 1928, the day on which the action concludes (Glendinning, 1983:204).

⁵⁸ In a recent book on "identity" in South African Drama, Anton Krueger defines the Roy Campbell represented in Antony Akerman's play *Dark Outsider* in simple terms as "the male chauvinist poet" (2010:76). Krueger's argument is that "Akerman's plays offer little by way of critical reflection on the problem of male chauvinism. Instead, his characters respond to their crisis of identity from within the context of their chauvinism itself. One does not get the impression (as one does in [Athol Fugard's] *Sorrows and Rejoicings*) that the masculine role identifications of these characters might be responsible for the conditions of their crises" (2010:76). I don't agree. In my view the way in which Akerman's play reveals the uses of Campbell's chauvinism in the process of his self-making has greater explanatory power than the somewhat maudlin account of a modern masculinity

Literary androgyny in “Georgia”

Roy Campbell’s “real-life” counterattack against Vita took the form of a satirical poem, *The Georgiad* (1931), written in the manner of Alexander Pope’s eighteenth century satire on literary dullness, *The Dunciad*, of almost exactly 200 years earlier (1728, 1729, & 1742). In Campbell’s poem, Vita appears as the hostess of “Georgiana’s Summer School of Love/ [...] A sort of Hostel where we seem to feel/ The earnest pulsing of some high ideal” (CWI, 1985:187). The hostel welcomes the “hero” of the poem “Androgyno” to its world of intellectual, literary and (bi-)sexual pleasures, all of which are pursued with energy and earnestness. In Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* (1605), the hermaphrodite Androgyno is the fool in Volpone’s entourage, which includes the dwarf, Nano and the eunuch Castrone.⁵⁹ The threesome entertain Volpone with philosophical riddles about sexual identity which lead nowhere, and simply augment the theme of “gulling” an idiot public, around which the plot revolves. The homophobic wit of *The Georgiad* is not only Campbell’s critique of the sexual mores of the Bloomsbury set, particularly the marriages of the Woolfs and the Nicolson, which (like that of the Campbells), were not sexually exclusive. It also figured what Campbell saw as their intellectual inbreeding, in which they made one another’s literary reputations; thus the poem shows both “Georgian” love and “Georgian” writing (implicitly Vita’s) to be vain and verbose hobbies. Campbell’s:

... new ‘Orlando’ flounces to his feet
And with a virginally vulpine air,
The hair-pins falling from his frowsy hair,
First meets his own approval in the glass,
Then tries his voice to see if it will pass ... (CWI, 1985:182)

The hero, having undergone his mock-terrifying metamorphosis, seeks both poetic and sexual satisfaction; but his lack of literary distinction is evident in foolishly naming himself after Jonson’s fool:

No sooner was our Frankenstein set free
Than for a name he racks his nimble wits
And on ‘Androgyno’ precisely hits,
Christens himself, then out into the street
As fast as he can scamper on his feet

that strives, fruitlessly, to adapt to its context in Fugard’s play. Akerman’s representation is more disturbing, though, in that it implies that Campbell’s chauvinism, as part of a discourse of “self-making”, cannot simply be discarded or reformed, but is integral to his creativity.

⁵⁹ The lines “Not mine to vie with you in love or hate,/ But mine to mock at fools in solemn state./ From your own ranks, log-rolled into renown/ I’ll choose my dwarf, my jester and my clown” (CWI, 1985:199) suggest that it is the threesome from *Volpone* that Campbell has in mind. The line also implies that Androgyno is taken from the ranks of the Georgians, which rebuts Alexander’s reading outlined below.

To find a lover: for within him rages
The red-hot bonfire, which if none assuages,
With sonnets he must fill a thousand pages. (*CWI*, 1985:185)

“Heroic” love and its literary expression is ridiculed at the outset in the lines:

Now Spring, sweet laxative of Georgian strains
Quickens the ink in literary veins,
The Stately Homes of England ope their doors,
To piping Nancy-boys, and crashing Bores (*CWI*, 1985:186)

Alexander’s biography implies that the homophobic vocabulary of *The Georgiad* serves as a cover for Campbell’s own bisexual history. The poem’s “hero”, Androgyno, Alexander argues, is both “the embodiment of Georgian values” and of Campbell’s values. He is “of Georgia” in his hermaphroditic identity, and his sexual appetites, and the fact that the poem ends with him “editing a posh review” in London. “On the other hand, he is like his creator in his hatred of ‘bookish’ sex, his vigour, and his sensuality. And when he leaves Long Barn, showering curses and kicks, he is behaving very much as Campbell would have liked to do” (Alexander, 1982:92). Where some critics attribute this heroic ambiguity to a poorly conceived plot, Alexander argues it reveals “the inherent contradictions in Campbell’s own make-up”; in *The Georgiad* the “enemy Campbell fought was a part of himself” (1982:93). He cites as evidence the contradiction between Campbell’s attack here on “Bloomsbury immorality” and his own “defiance of his family’s puritanical morality” (1982:93, 92). I take this to be a coded reference to the half-told tale of Roy Campbell’s own sexual history. Elsewhere in the biography Alexander comments, disingenuously, that in his early Oxford years Campbell “seems to have had many casual affairs, a number of them with women” (1982:24). In particular, it is implied that Campbell’s association with Earp was a sexual one. He comments that “their liaison was in several respects coming to resemble that of Rimbaud and Verlaine” (1982:26). This innuendo is retrospectively borrowed from Harold Nicolson’s description of Campbell in 1926 as “another Rimbaud” (Glendinning, 1983:176).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ On the other hand, Joseph Pearce’s biography, which is focussed on Campbell’s spiritual development, gives short shrift to the idea that Campbell had sexual relationships with men, stating that although “it is possible that Campbell went through a bisexual phase at Oxford, Alexander makes no effort to justify the claim... He merely cites Campbell’s friend Rob Lyle as the source of the allegation. Lyle, however, states categorically, ‘I know *nothing* of any “homosexual attachments”.’ This being so, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary one should perhaps assume that Campbell’s friendships at Oxford were platonic” (Pearce, 2001:22). Pearce then dismisses Alexander’s reading of Campbell’s “divided nature” as baseless. Perhaps the point should be made that “dividedness” and complexity may be represented metaphorically in sexual terms, but that it may be a mistake to read this too literally as expressing sexual “identity” of some kind. This is a point that Eve Sedgwick makes in her reading of the “sentimental” masculinity of Nietzsche and Wilde (1990).

At the time the first biography was written, the “allegation” of homosexual relationships was suppressed by Campbell’s heirs and family, notably Rob Lyle, who was his chief benefactor in his late years in Portugal, and subsequently married the younger Campbell daughter, Anna.⁶¹ Also suppressed was the story Teresa Campbell told Alexander, of “how her father had struggled against sexual temptation”, and in 1952 “had tried to evade it by the radical methods of St. Origen by castrating himself in the bathroom of his home after a drinking bout” (Alexander, 2010:18). The Campbells’ mutual (bi-)sexual histories contributed to Alan Paton’s decision not to write Campbell’s biography as originally intended. Campbell’s moral and political failings were unpalatable material for Paton, who, as Alexander shows, had at this point established biographical interests in liberal political figures which conformed to a narrative pattern. As Paton commented in a letter to a friend ““Am now contemplating that fascist anti-Semite, Campbell”” (cited in Alexander, 2010:18). Finding that he couldn’t make sense of this uncomfortable figure, he handed his wealth of accumulated archival material to Peter Alexander. While Paton’s reluctance to proceed is understandable, it also reflects the homophobia and prudery that runs parallel to the Campbells’ bohemian lifestyle since the 1920s, and polarises the biographical account of the Campbells in ways which foreground either their religious development (Pearce) or celebrates their “modern” sexual freedom (Alexander). In either case Campbell’s life story is “conscripted” here to serve a specific cause. I should add for the record, however, that I don’t doubt Alexander’s claims – the vehemence of the repression by Campbell’s family suggests they were probably true, apart from which he had sufficient verbal evidence which he was unable to publish.

Against Alexander’s reading, though, I would suggest that it is difficult to derive any clear sense of the speaker’s sexual interests in *The Georgiad*, apart from a conventional reference to the relieving distraction of the glimpse of housemaids’ ankles during the agonising dinner party. In the poem, the poetic speaker is mainly a reporting figure, who bears witness to Androgyno’s “heroic” performance at the home of Georgiana. The speaker makes no bones about his distaste for the “literary dinner”. Part Three of the poem opens with a diatribe

⁶¹ In revisiting this issue in a recent piece on Campbell, Alexander cites the unpublished letter in his possession from Robert Lyle to Prof W.H. Gardner which explicitly contradicts Lyle’s later retraction on this point. In this early letter (1958), Lyle says of Campbell’s relationship to William Walton that it was “casually – and cynically – homosexual... At that time, as now, homosexuality was one of the main ways to an advancement, socially and, especially, artistically, at least to those without other resources. (Genius doesn’t help much)” (in Alexander, 2006:14). The tone of the final comment does suggest that Lyle was uncomfortable with this aspect of Campbell’s personal history; it sounds as if he would like to “exonerate” him from responsibility for homosexual relationships, as if they were a sin.

against “Dinner, most ancient of the Georgian rites,/The noisy prelude of loquacious nights”, and describes his discomfort at this ritual:

When I have sat like Job among the guests,
Sandwiched between two bores, a hapless prey,
Chained to my chair, and cannot get away,
Longing, without appetite to eat,
To fill my ears, more than my mouth, with meat,
And stuff my eardrums full of fish and bread
Against the din to wad my dizzy head:
When I have watched each mouthful that they poke
Between their jaws, and praying they might choke,
Found the descending lump but cleared the way
For further anecdotes and more to say.
O Dinners! Take my curse upon you all,
But literary dinners most of all, (*CW I*, 1985:207, 208)

His recurring and central complaint is the power of the reviewing literary set to make or break reputations; a gripe illustrated with numerous asides about particular minor writers and reviewers of the day, all identified by name – John Squire, Humbert Wolfe, and Ellis Roberts among them. Those who had praised Campbell’s poetry (such as Squire) are not spared for a minute. The work of the regular reviewers is described as dismemberment by dinner silverware. As he says of the “weekly-scrawling crew”:

Though to fight cleanly back they are not able,
They’ll get their own back at the dinner-table
Where, armed with knife and fork, entrenched they sit
Encouraged more by numbers than by wit,
And by the wordy goddess urged to battle
Fight out their Bannockburns of tittle-tattle,
While truth in terror from the slaughter flies
And probability in anguish dies - (*CW I*, 1985:208)

The chameleonic hero, Androgyno, is able to occupy multiple sexual and social positions – “For he was none of those half-hearted fools/Who, hesitating, fall between two stools:/In such predicaments he, nothing loth, /Would cheat the proverb, and sit down on both” (*CW I*, 1985:213). Thus he enthusiastically responds to, even epitomizes, the culture in which he finds himself:

Androgyno, to boredom swift-inured
Soon on his fork has got a novel skewered,
And though he’d never read it in his life,
Was slashing at it boldly with his knife.

Not only does he speedily adapt to the literary cultural scene, he is of course also the sexual hero of the poem, and soon expresses an exaggerated version of the love energy at Georgiana's summer school. First falling in love with his hostess, he rapidly proceeds to fall for everyone else at the dinner:

Next to his new-found love [Georgiana] our hero sat,
But she, alas, began to smell a rat,
For every glance in his direction shot
A doubly warm response from him begot –
From guest to guest his roving glances wandered
And many an amorous twinkle there he squandered:
The bees were wakened in a hundred bonnets
And the air hummed with germinating sonnets,
T'was then she realized with a start –
The monster was untrue, he had no heart,
Or else too much, which made it ten times worse
(The thought came to her in a tragic verse) (*CW I*: 1985, 210)

Apart from resonances with Jonson and Pope, this dinner scene also bears echoes of Christopher Marlowe's "tragic verse" in his incomplete "brief epic" poem, "Hero and Leander" (*Norton Anthology*, 1983:170-185). Not only do the heroic couplets and the rhythm of the lines echo those of Marlowe's poem, but the depiction of a dinner party designed to generate love affairs is a strong thematic link. In Marlowe's poem, an annual "solemn feast" is held in honour of Adonis, and is presided over by the beautiful Hero, who has taken a vow of chastity as a servant of the goddess Venus. The narrator tells us: "Thither resorted many a wandering guest/ To meet their loves; such as had none at all/ Came lovers home from this great festival" (line 96). Marlowe's poem uses the mock-"tragic" desire that springs up between the Adonis-like Leander and the beautiful Hero at this festival as a pretext for an extended and erotic account of her efforts to honour her vows by fleeing "to the tree of Tantalus". That is to say, she embodies a different sort of ambivalence to Androgynö – she simultaneously embraces and resists her passion for Leander by maintaining her chastity in a purely technical sense. The absurdity of her position (as Leander argues, she serves the Goddess of Love, who would surely delight in the affair) is mocked, not least by the more manly erotic sub-plots in the poem which include efforts by Neptune to seduce the equally beautiful Leander as he swims across the Hellespont to visit Hero in Sestos. Finally "the truce was broke" and the "Poor silly maiden, at his mercy was" (lines 285,286), and breaks her vow. *The Georgiad* and "Hero and Leander" both mock the ubiquity of desire (and of the futile effort to resist it), but Marlowe comes closer to maintaining the appearance of a truly

“tragic verse”. If Campbell indeed had Marlowe’s poem in mind, his depiction of the feast of love exaggerates further the subtle mockery in Marlowe’s tale of youthful passion.

Campbell’s Androgyno does have the “merit” of energy and vitality, as Alexander suggests. But he also bears some resemblance to Jonson’s original, in that his chief “skill” is the slippery one of adaptation, ridiculed in the image of sitting on “both stools”. In Jonson’s play, the riddles exchanged between Androgyno, and the dwarf Nano (the eunuch Castrone appears to be silent) about Androgyno’s “hermaphroditism” establish it as a metaphor for the untroubled ability to change condition according to circumstance – in particular, it refers to the shift in religious allegiances necessitated by the Reformation. Jonson’s Androgyno declares himself most comfortable in his current guise, which accommodates all possibility. Campbell lampoons this chameleonic character in *The Georgiad*:

Both sexes rampantly dispute the field
And at alternate moments gain or yield.
This was no neuter of a doubtful gender,
But both in him attained their fullest splendour,
Unlike our modern homos, who are neither,
He could be homosexual with either
And heterosexual with either, too –
A damn sight more than you or I could do! (CWI, 1985:183)

The targets of this formulation are, amongst others, Freud and Jung. After Androgyno has wreaked havoc in Georgiana’s hostel, a professor is called in bearing a large textbook, who promptly proves that “Androgyno” does not exist. In irritation, the hero flounces out to assert his existence and indeed his authority as the “editor of a posh review” in London. Primarily Androgyno is a mock-hero, who epitomizes a literary culture. I would argue, pace Alexander, that he does not reflect Campbell himself, who is closer to the poetic speaker, figured in the poem as the critical outsider.

While the poem opens with a direct sally against the “androgynous” cultural history of England in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, Campbell may even have a sense of writerly affinity with Woolf in the club spirit of the world of letters which they briefly share – and of course, specifically in relation to Vita, who had hurt them both in different ways. In the biography *Vita* (1983), Glendinning recounts Woolf’s response to one of the ubiquitous literary events of the day. She accompanied Leonard Woolf and Harold Nicolson to see Vita receive the Hawthornden Prize on 16 June 1927, and, according to Glendinning, “thought it ‘a horrid show-up’ of ‘all us chattering writers.... The whole business of writing became infinitely

distasteful.’ It was, she wrote in her diary, ‘the thick dull middle class of letters’ that met, not the aristocracy” (Glendinning, 1983:178). Glendinning calls the Hawthornden, “that most establishment of prizes” (1983:178), and notes how Vita wished to hang her poetic reputation on the success of her winning poem, *The Land*. However, the poem also received severe criticism from relevant, and more innovative, literary quarters; apart from Virginia Woolf’s ambivalence about it, Vita herself reported that Edith Sitwell had called it the worst poem in the English language (1983:178). The Campbells would have been party to these discussions about literary value during their stay at Long Barn, and Campbell was certainly not alone in his critique.

That Campbell’s lampoon of Vita’s sexual and literary excess (and the connection between the two) had some solid ground can be seen from a brief look at accounts of Vita’s life.

Glendinning writes:

On the evening of 1 December, alone at Long Barn, Vita in a burst of creative emotional energy wrote no less than eleven sonnets about herself and Mary Campbell. She wrote two more the next morning before going up to London to see Valerie acting in a play. (1983:186)

On hearing this from her by letter, Harold responded, astutely: ““But oh how I hope she isn’t in a muddle – oh dear! Oh dear! One doesn’t write ten [sic] sonnets in one night unless one *is* in a muddle”” (1983:186). Getting in a “muddle” is Vita’s own description of her life, which she relates to her inability to take a position, or see the consequences of her actions. She wrote to Harold, with endearing self-deprecation: ““No darling, your Mar is a born muddler. Neither one thing nor the other, not enough character to be either austere or dissipated. The result is a mess, and nobody is pleased”” (1983:185). Campbell’s satirical representation of both Vita’s “muddledness”, for which androgyny becomes a metaphor, and her literary logorrhoea appears to correspond to the assessments of Vita’s closest friends (Harold and Virginia, notably) as well as Vita herself, in Glendinning’s account.

I suggest that despite the nasty references to “nancies” and ageing “literary suffragettes”, it would be difficult to glean Campbell’s own sexual interests from *The Georgiad*. The figure of Androgyno appears to be a direct parody, borrowed from Jonson, of Woolf’s figure of Orlando, and thus represents a further aspect of Vita herself – she is both “Georgiana”, the matriarch of Bloomsbury, and “Androgyno”, the heroic swashbuckling weekender, whose primary heroic “flaw” is merely too much enthusiasm. He (she) is at odds with the Georgian

scene only in that he is not willing to put enough “research” into his own nature, or into the nature of happiness a la “Bertrand Russell or Marie Stopes”, or, for that matter, a la Freud or Jung.

Perhaps it is also plausible to see in *Androgynous* a version of Vita that Campbell had some affinity for. Glendinning frequently points to Vita’s endearing energy and sexual vitality, and Mary Campbell’s own complaint about Woolf’s *Orlando* is that it misses this dimension of Vita. She wrote: “Orlando is too safe too sexless and too easy-going to be really like you. But then I am thinking of him as he appears to *me*, he is something so different to Virginia. Ah! an entire book about Orlando with no mention of her deep fiery sensuality – that strange mixture of fire and gloom and heat and cold – seems to *me* slightly pale” (in Glendinning, 1983:205, 206).⁶² It may even be that Roy was aware of Mary’s critique of Woolf’s representation of Vita, and humorously exaggerates the sensuality of his mock-hero accordingly.

The real Roy Campbell did reportedly respond to the affair in violent, childish and “unsophisticated” ways. According to Vita, his first response was to seem unaffected and to assert that he himself was having an affair with Dorothy Warren. He then threatened Mary with a knife, threatened suicide and murder, and kept up a drama for several days. His final engagements with Vita, though, were conciliatory, even warm. Glendinning records a note that Campbell sent to Vita, which suggests that he deplored the intensity of his own feelings about the affair:

‘I am tired of trying to hate you and I realize that there is no way in which I could harm you (as I would have liked to) without equally harming us all. I do not dislike any of your personal characteristics and I liked you very much before I knew anything. All this acrimony on my part is due rather to our respective positions in the tangle. I am much more angry with M.

We [Roy and Vita] may both reach a state of mind when we realize that we have not done each other any *lasting* harm: and I want to reach that state of mind as quickly as possible because this is absolute Hell.’ (Glendinning, 1983:183)

⁶² The connection between the novel, and Vita’s affair with Mary which took place while Woolf was writing it, is made plain in this letter. Mary wrote from France:

I hate the idea that you who are so hidden and secret and proud even with people you know best, should be suddenly presented so nakedly for anyone to read about ... Vita darling you have been so much Orlando to me that how can I help absolutely understanding and *loving* the book.... Through all the slight mockery which is always in the tone of Virginia’s voice, and the analysis etc, *Orlando* is written by someone who loves you so obviously Don’t you remember when we imagined you as the young Orlando? (Glendinning, 1983:205)

This note is surprising in the light of *The Georgiad*. It seems that there was perhaps a reason beyond sexual jealousy that caused Campbell to sharpen his satirical weaponry as he did between the end of the affair in 1928, and the publication of the satire in 1931. Harold Nicolson's comments in 1958, in an unpublished letter to W.H. Gardner, the first person to begin the process of compiling Campbell's biography, may shed light on his enduring rancour. Nicolson wrote:

The current legend is that out of charity we lent him the gardener's cottage at our home at Long Barn, Sevenoaks Weald. That we there introduced him to several of our literary friends who came down to dine or sleep or to stay from Saturday to Monday. That some of these friends, notably Raymond Mortimer and Edward Sackville-West (my wife's cousin) did not pay sufficient attention to the Campbells and in fact talked about people whom they did not know or books in French or German which they had not read. That Roy Campbell was incensed by this behaviour and acquired angered feelings of inferiority. That he therefore quitted the house and thereafter revenged himself on all of us in 'The Georgiad'. (quoted in Alexander, 1982:99)

Clearly the Nicolsons had the standing to control the "legend", and thus Roy Campbell's reputation as a boorish colonial effectively silenced him in "Georgia". In the light of Nicolson's influential construction, the Popeian satire of *The Georgiad*, in which Campbell turned a satirical literary tradition with historical links to the Sackville-West line against them, seems the most appropriate revenge available to him. However the costs of this revenge were perhaps too high for Campbell; ranks had been drawn, and he became alienated from a number of friends who were not at the centre of the Nicolson circle.⁶³ Crucially, his chief remaining friend was the much darker other satirist, Wyndham Lewis, whose influence will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2.⁶⁴

⁶³ Joseph Pearce conflates the responses to the *Georgiad* with responses to Campbell's overt support of Wyndham Lewis in the late 1920s, in his reviews, and in his monograph *Wyndham Lewis*:

Roy's friendship with both John and Huxley was jeopardized by his public support of Percy Wyndham Lewis and would be damaged almost beyond repair by the publication of the *Georgiad*. Campbell confessed to Sibbett that the part he had played 'in sticking up for Wyndham Lewis' had 'embroiled' him with Huxley, 'with Plomer, and several of my old friends'. In the acrimonious aftermath of Roy's broadside against Bloomsbury, John terminated his frequent visits and Huxley no longer came for weekends. (Pearce, 2001:132)

⁶⁴ Campbell himself comments as follows on the *Georgiad* in *Broken Record* (1934):

I have been accused of a thousand crimes in representing modern England in my *Georgiad*; and of attitudes I have never taken, such as (for instance) moral indignation about 'nancies'. After writing the *Georgiad*, I had seventy anonymous letters from them: accusing me of sinning against the laws of hospitality, 'hitting below the belt', 'letting the cat out of the bag', and exaggeration. In the first place, I only object to 'nancydom' as the badge of the paid literary flunkey. My attitude to my lively hero Androgyno is one of affection, and I have lived among sailors from my earliest youth. As for sinning against any laws of hospitality, it was simply the sort of 'walk into my parlour' hospitality of the spider to the fly.... (CW III, 1988:138)

Conclusion: Dandies, Rogues and “Zulus”

In this chapter, I have read Akerman’s play as a gloss on Campbell’s struggle as a provincial or “colonial” poet who seeks fame and acknowledgement among the avant-garde writers and artists of London and Europe in the 1920s. He wishes to resist his construction as a boorish and uneducated outsider, and yet, at the same time, he lays claim to his outsider’s “experience” as a source for his distinctive style and voice. While he plays with and invokes these caricatures of himself at times, they would also come to acquire a burdensome weight over the course of his career.

In my view Akerman’s play usefully reveals both the tentative and the contextual nature of Campbell’s version of South African white male consciousness. I suggest that his early performance of his “Zulu” identity is in keeping with the dandified self-styling of his Oxford and London friends from 1919 to the early 1920s in which a distinctive and carefully cultivated identity becomes, as Martin Green argues, the mark of resistance against a culture which requires serious “growing up” into the new generation of patriarchs. In Green’s paradigm, Campbell’s cultish aggression would conform to the “rogue” version of the children-of-the-sun: a figure intimately connected to the dandies and the naïfs, but whose aggressive and at times domineering energy is associated with the Harlequin figure of the *commedia dell’arte*. Campbell however is a latecomer to this scene. His distinctive inflection of this roguishness is linked to his own colonial roots, and he performs it both to, but also against, the influential literary world of Bloomsbury in the late 1920s. *Dark Outsider* shows how Roy’s performances of masculinist “identity” relate to his experiences of cultural power and powerlessness; versions of his “dead selves” thus allow him to respond forcefully to his place in a world that defines the terms of his entry to it. That the figures of Mary, Vita, the “Zulu beaters”, and others – including the Javan deer – are sacrificed to this project is undeniable. More disturbing, perhaps, is the thought that this may be in the nature of storytelling.

Chapter Two: Literary issues and networks in Campbell's early prose works

The most influential formal impulses of canonical modernism have been strategies of inwardness, which set out to reappropriate an alienated universe by transforming it into personal styles and private languages: such wills to style have seemed in retrospect to reconfirm the very privatisation and fragmentation of social life against which they meant to protest. So it is that the initial, passionately subversive force of the modernist symbolic act is ever fainter and more distant for the contemporary reader... (Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist*. 1979:2)

For scientific and artistic values, even by studiously muddling them, cannot be made to tally. Science is concerned with classification, generalisation, and with the *sameness* between things. Art is solely concerned with particularising, with resolving things into their separate identities, and with the *differences* between things. These two principles can only balance one another when they act in their natural places in *opposite* scales of the balance. (Roy Campbell, "Wyndham Lewis" 1932. *CW III*, 1988:14, 15)

In the previous chapter I suggested that, in Akerman's depiction at least, the figure of Roy Campbell uses physical and oral expression as a sort of cultural weapon with which he protests against the values of contemporary literary Englishness, and makes his iconoclastic presence felt. His prose works of the 1920s and early 1930s show that his literary criticism, too, is a tool (at times, a weapon) used to assert a distinctive position for himself in post-Union South Africa and in modernist post-World War I England; both contexts which Campbell considered inhospitable to art for different, but related, reasons.

In South Africa in the mid-1920s, it was in founding and producing the consciously modernist, aggressively satirical magazine *Voorslag* (1926), that Campbell honed his ideas about literature. His early lectures and *Voorslag* essays comment particularly on contemporary modernist writers, notably D.H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot; but he also wrote reviews of the Russian novelists, and of contemporary writing about science, philosophy, literary history and biography. His prose works show that he was aware of, and engaged with, the discussions of his time concerning "primitivism", "Romanticism", Futurism and Vorticism, and most interesting to me, the artistic cult of "impersonality" associated with Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Yeats, and others. His letters of the period show a deep interest in both contemporary literary debates and the art movements that had emerged since the *fin de siècle*.⁶⁵ As this chapter will show, Campbell joins his voice to the influential ones

⁶⁵ Campbell's most detailed account of his response to contemporary art can be found in a letter to Ned Roworth, in which his comments on works of Hendrik Pierneef reproduced in *Huisgenoot* magazine, lead into a detailed account of his reading of the recent moderns. Of Pierneef he says:

I liked the pictures very much there seems to be a fine strength about them: but I could not help thinking how much finer they would be if he had a sense of composition. Van Gogh, whom he resembles slightly, even in his wildest moods paid more attention to composition of his pictures than to the lyrical joy of painting.... (SANL, 1925 MSB 76 Box 1, Letter 4:2,3)

of Eliot and Lewis in particular in taking up what he sees as an anti-Romantic critical stance in his prose essays of the 1920s, but his version of this argument has its own distinctive inflection, and poetic consequences.

The second epigraph above, taken from his 1931 monograph on “Wyndham Lewis”, indicates this position. Whether the processes of art and science can be divided along the lines that Campbell suggests here is doubtful.⁶⁶ It is surely the case that “art”, too, seeks similarity in metaphor, simile, resemblances and linguistic parallels. By the same token, the scientific process of “classification” is as much a process of drawing distinctions as it is one of finding commonality. An art “concerned with particularising” sounds very much like an art of observation; one which aspires to claim for itself the methods and truth-status of empirical research. In fact, this statement seems to imply that art should carry the authority of science; and in this Campbell’s concerns resemble those of many of his modernist contemporaries. While insisting on the distinction between science and art, the chiasmic attribution of the characteristics of the one field to the other achieves precisely the “blurring” he repudiates. This definition of “art” and “science” is characteristic of the critical position (bolstered by the rambunctious, almost aggressive tone) which runs throughout his essays of the 1920s; namely that art is made through gestures, oppositions and bold distinctions. Such clear and dramatic literary gestures for Campbell are intended to counteract a “Romantic” notion of art; one which, in Campbell’s view, blurs the borders between self and world through poetic or rhetorical device. It is in his “externalizing” practice that he can be said to follow Wyndham Lewis, as will be discussed later in this chapter. In Jameson’s view, it is his specific mode of “expressionism” that saves Lewis’s work from the “privatisation” characteristic of much modernist art, through which the “subversive force” of the work becomes “ever fainter” for a contemporary reader. Campbell and Lewis had in common unmitigated boldness in their representations. Both share the broader modernist impulse to separate from the legacies of Romanticism, but quarrel equally with forms of expression which explore the private, solipsistic and “fragmented” nature of contemporary experience.

In this letter he also comments on other books he has been reading on modern art, and on the conversations of Renoir and Manet amongst others. His comments on Henri Rousseau are especially interesting. In the letter he says of Rousseau with approval that “his painting is neither ancient nor modern – it is absolutely elemental” (1925:4). As an untrained artist depicting scenes of an African jungle he never visited, Rousseau’s work exemplifies the late nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic fascination with both the “primitive” and the naive, which Campbell would come to reject as a stance, or a movement; this comment reflects Campbell’s ambivalence about this primitivism. Campbell’s interest in art was lifelong and he sketched throughout his life.

⁶⁶ I am indebted to Prof Duncan Brown for pointing this out in a seminar presentation of this chapter.

The lineaments of the “anti-Romantic” principle expounded by the “classicist” modernists with whom Campbell wishes to identify are slippery, as is evident from his use of terms. In particular, as I will argue in this chapter, the difficulty of defining this principle is most visible when he expresses it to the very different literary audiences of colonial South Africa and metropolitan London. The focus here on Campbell’s multi-faceted quarrel with an alleged lingering “neo-Romanticism” in modern art, I suggest, makes it possible to situate his essays usefully in relation to modernist theories about art, subjectivity and society, as well as to similar nascent debates in South Africa of the 1920s.

South African essays, 1925 – 1926

Roy Campbell founded the journal *Voorslag* in Natal in 1926, and edited the first three numbers in collaboration with his new friends William Plomer and Laurens van der Post. He resigned during the production of the third number in protest over efforts to curb his editorial powers. Lewis Reynolds, the wealthy heir to a local sugar estate who sponsored the magazine, had been supportive of Campbell up until this point. Peter Alexander argues that the magazine’s political outspokenness in the first number made Reynolds nervous, because it jeopardised his ambition to gain a seat in Parliament (Alexander, 1989:104). Reynolds wanted their business manager, Maurice Webb, to keep a closer eye on what went into the pages of *Voorslag*; but Webb’s publishing experience was limited to business directories. This suggestion therefore outraged Campbell’s personal pride, as well as his sense of artistic independence. It confirmed his view that South Africa was a nation of “grocers” and “counter-jumpers” with no interest in ideas. When the crisis came Edward Roworth, the art editor, supported the business management team, thereby ending his friendship with Campbell.

Voorslag as anti-establishment modernist magazine

Campbell’s intention to use *Voorslag* to provoke and arouse a South African readership is a source of familiar anecdote in South African literary history. His first provocative move was to bring in his new friend William Plomer as assistant editor, installing him in a cottage near the Campbells’ own one at Lewis Reynolds’ estate Umdoni Park, near Sezela, on the coast south of Durban (Alexander, 1989:98). Plomer had published *Turbott Wolfe* in February of 1926, a novel which had raised a furore for its exploration of the personal and political

possibilities of inter-racial love.⁶⁷ At the age of 23 Plomer had already outraged much of white South African society, as the responses of South African critics to his book show.⁶⁸ On the other hand, it received instant acclaim abroad, with Desmond MacCarthy, literary editor of *The New Statesman*, calling it “‘about the best novel of the year’” (cited in Alexander, 1989:96). According to Peter Alexander:

The violence of this reaction in South Africa, combined with the laudatory reviews abroad, delighted Plomer and excited the aggression of Campbell, who was always spoiling for a fight. Campbell was convinced that *Turbott Wolfe* would prove to be the best novel ever written in South Africa, and wrote to tell Plomer so:

T.W. took my breath away completely. It does not matter if people in England don't realise what it means, it will wake them up properly. I bet there was never such an orgasm before experienced by the elegant and accomplished Hogarth Press. After years of publishing Herbert Read Eliot and Graves I think their printing machines must have had a fit of D.T.s when they had to go through with this. The language is really magnificent: you handle prose like poetry – it absolutely drives: in one or two places it goes as if there were a big Cunard Turbine behind it. (Alexander, 1989:97)

This comment is typical of Campbell's confrontational critical style, and foreshadows the different directions that his and Plomer's careers would take later on. Alexander's biography of William Plomer (1989) shows that he was intent on entering the literary mainstream in England, writing to Harold Monro, a key figure in establishing contemporary English poetry,⁶⁹ from his outpost on a sheep farm in the Eastern Cape in the early 1920s (Alexander, 1989:60). In 1924, from his father's trading station at Entumeni in Zululand, he wrote to Leonard and Virginia Woolf about the novel he was working on; a correspondence which culminated in Hogarth Press's publication of *Turbott Wolfe* (Alexander, 1989:85). Campbell

⁶⁷ In the novel, Wolfe helps to found a society in “Lembuland” called “Young Africa”, “to work against race prejudice in South Africa. The society's chief practical activity is the encouraging of mixed-race marriages with the idea of producing a South Africa in which the race problem would have been settled by miscegenation” (Alexander, 1997:24). The manifesto of “Young Africa” in *Turbott Wolfe* is striking:

“...WE BELIEVE:

1. That Africa is not the white man's country.
2. That miscegenation is the only way for Africa to be secured to the Africans.
3. That it is inevitable, right and proper.
4. That if it can be shown to be so, we shall have laid true foundations for the future Coloured World.
5. That we are pioneers” (Plomer, 1980 (1926):70).

⁶⁸ Harold Wodson, the editor of the *Natal Advertiser*, for example, wrote a leading article entitled “A Nasty book on a nasty subject”:

Gone are the days of Olive Schreiner, of Fitzpatrick's ‘Jock of the Bushveld’, of Rider Haggard's vivid and inspiring romances in which white men were white and the kafir was black, but a gentleman. The modern novelist, trying to ‘catch’ South Africa's atmosphere, usually introduces some strain of actual or potential degeneracy into characters he toys with; as if the sight of a sunlit land, four-fifths of whose populace wears little or no clothing at all, had wrenched out of position the foundations on which conventionality rests. (cited in Alexander, 1989:96, 97)

⁶⁹ Alexander notes that Monro founded the Poetry Bookshop in 1913, and published Edward Marsh's series *Georgian Poetry* from 1912 to 1922, as well as the *Chapbook* from 1919 to 1925 (1989:60).

had a less politic sense of how to channel his energies. His comments on *Turbott Wolfe* exemplify his critical intent – an impulsive urge to “wake up” literary society, rather than to cultivate a place within it. It is probably due to this fairly indiscriminate impulse that commentators designate Campbell as an “outsider”; an epithet not applied to the equally critical, if more purposeful, Plomer, or to Laurens van der Post, the third in the trio. At another level, Campbell’s comment on Plomer’s work employs two opposed senses of the word “mechanical”; on the one hand, it implies the rote and routine work of the printing machines at the Hogarth Press, which would be shocked into a state of confusion, a “delirium”, by the surprise of a different type of book; on the other hand his reference to the way in which Plomer’s language “drives” like a “Cunard turbine” carries a Futurist sense of the mechanical: force, efficiency, energy, speed, work.⁷⁰ For Campbell, the positive sense of the “mechanical” is associated with energy and creative labour, rather than repetition and routine. His first major work, *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924), drew on a Vorticist and Futurist idiom, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3, and in *Voorslag* such imagery serves the aim of introducing modernist perspectives into the South African literary debate. But the ambiguous use of the term “mechanical” signals a further ambivalence about metropolitan modernity. On the one hand the machines of Hogarth Press represent a recent high point of mechanical progress; on the other hand, by comparison to Plomer’s novel they are not new enough; as an end product of the march of history, they have lost the force of true “newness”. Implicit in this assessment of Plomer is the theme of the “rejuvenating” potential of literature produced in South Africa – a theme that Campbell forwards in his comments on the Afrikaans movement of the 1930s. Paradoxically, he appears to be arguing that Plomer is more “modernist” than the English literary avant-garde represented by the radical Hogarth Press, whose precepts he applies to the South African scene.

Under the editorship of Campbell, *Voorslag*’s explicit aim was to arouse⁷¹ the South African literary world aesthetically and politically. From the first number it was clear that Campbell

⁷⁰ At this moment in his career, this is a favourite metaphor of Campbell’s for the work of making art. He uses it, for example, in a letter to his friend and patron, the Cape Town advertiser C.J. Sibbett, in describing his fall-out with “Ned” Roworth, the art editor of the *Voorslag* team:

... I think Ned thought there was something very romantic in playing at being an artist, he thought my shabbiness and poverty was pleasantly bohemian – but when he looked into my work-shop and saw there nothing but a very grim and very greasy mechanic, stripped to the waste (sic), and oiling a dynamo - it did not take long to make up his mind which way to go. (SANL, MS 17:3).

⁷¹ Plomer and Campbell intended to start their own magazine, *Boomslang*, once it was clear that their intentions for *Voorslag* could not be realized. Campbell wrote about this plan to his friend and benefactor, C.J. Sibbett, as follows:

and Plomer fully intended that the magazine would live up to its violent title of “whiplash”, a title that transforms an artefact of settler culture into a modernist trope. In his dissertation on the *Voorslag* trio, Geoffrey Haresnape notes the remarkable choice of an Afrikaans title by an English speaking South African writer. He comments:

Clearly, it was a manifestation of Campbell’s rebellion against his milieu. Strictly speaking, a ‘voorslag’ is not the whole whip-lash, but rather a thong fastened to the end which comes into contact with the backs of the oxen. Campbell chose with accuracy. The name revealed his intention to challenge and to satirize his English-speaking countrymen. A ‘voorslag’ may also be a proposal or a suggestion, a useful secondary meaning for a magazine intending to bring a new perspective into South African letters. The expression ‘soos ’n voorslag wees’ (to be a real live-wire) perhaps provided Campbell with an image for himself as editor. (1982:64)

The title bears the diverse meanings of violent arousal to action, which will become the image of “the sting” of “truth” in Campbell’s *Adamastor* poems (c.f. “The Snake”), as well as a “proposal”, a new and pointed suggestion. That the title implies Campbell’s and Plomer’s interest in Futurism and Vorticism is further evident in the sense that the magazine is an heir to Wyndham Lewis’s periodical *BLAST* (1914). Haresnape suggests that:

In his title, Campbell evoked the spirit of Wyndham Lewis’s BLAST: a Review of the Great English Vortex, a magazine known to him during his Oxford days and after. Reynolds, Webb and Roworth suggested John Middleton Murry’s Adelphi (1923-1927) and Scofield Thayer’s The Dial (1920-1929) as prototypes for their South African magazine. Campbell went along with this, but he wanted his review to have vitality and satiric edge which an accomplished, urbane review devoted to high artistic standards might lack. In order to castigate what he regarded as the smugness, complacency and inertia of the colonial English, he needed to marshal the same forces that Wyndham Lewis had used against English culture. The first and second numbers of BLAST anticipate the first and second numbers of Voorslag in many ways, not least in their ‘aim to be an avenue for ... vivid and violent ideas that could reach the public in no other way’ (BLAST, no.1, quotation from ‘Long live the Vortex!’). In their titles, both BLAST and Voorslag suggested aggression.⁷² (1982:65, 66)

We want for the first time, to apply international standards to South African art, literature and criticism – A thing which we were not allowed to do in *Voorslag*. We are going to have separate articles on all the outstanding writers in the past and to try to set them in a proper perspective. It is a thing which has to be done. Hitherto we have been too timid and friendly and amateurish. Our artists and writers (excepting Pringle, Olive Schreiner, and Lady Duff Gordon) have been for the most part tradesmen and in the interests of trade, they have decided to live and let live – with the result that we have no artistic pride as a nation, and no taste at all. It was partly our intention of doing this in *Voorslag* that led to the panic on the part of Roworth and Webb who saw in it a very poor market. (Undated letter, received 21.8.1926. SANL, MS 17:1,2)

⁷² Campbell would also have been familiar with *The Tyro: a Review of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture and Design* a short-lived magazine which Lewis brought out in 1921-1922 as a successor to *BLAST*. In the late 1920s, Campbell contributed to Lewis’s subsequent little magazine, *The Enemy*.

It could be argued that the taste for more urbane reviews such as *Adelphi* and *The Dial* in the South African context marks an anxiety about cultural respectability at the “margins”. Not only do the magazine’s backers favour these reviews, but the novelist Sarah Gertrude Millin, too, compares *Voorslag* to *The Dial*, in the letter pages of *Voorslag*. Millin’s surprising argument is that the similarity between the two magazines compromises the “originality” of *Voorslag*. Campbell responds with due irritation at the attribution of *The Dial*’s influence, pointing out the number and diversity of such periodicals.⁷³ His irritation is perhaps both at Millin’s literary parochialism, and at her conventional brand of racism, which presents South African “natives” as a “problem” for white colonials to solve. The author of *God’s Stepchildren* (1924) would have had an entirely opposed view of miscegenation to Plomer’s, as the novel explores its “tragic” consequences, rather than its radical political potential. J.M. Coetzee shows in *White Writing* (1988) how Millin’s novel expresses familiar colonial anxieties about the degeneration of white races in contact with black colonized societies.⁷⁴ However, Campbell’s response to Millin also lends support to Haresnape’s suggestion that he preferred the iconoclastic, provocative literary style associated with modernist manifestos, and represented in extreme form by the little magazines associated with Wyndham Lewis.

Wit and the critique of racial discourse in *Voorslag*

In their editions of *Voorslag*, Plomer and Campbell inverted the terms in which colonial society accounted for itself, with striking satirical effect. Plomer famously declared that the intention of *Voorslag* was to ““sting the mental hindquarters... of the bovine citizenry of the Union”” (cited in Alexander, 1989:95), thereby of course representing (white) citizens as

⁷³ *The Dial* is described by Alan Golding as a cautious periodical that avoided political controversy and debate, and addressed itself to the “interested informed general reader” (2005:44). He cites Jane Heap, the editor of the *Little Review*, who called “*The Dial* ‘a de-alcoholized version of *The Little Review*,’ linking *The Dial* with the repressive politics of Prohibition” (2005:44). In a review of *Voorslag* in the *Rand Daily Mail* (16 June 1926), entitled “A South African Magazine: Is *Voorslag* What It Should Be?”, Millin argues that the magazine has emerged at an important time of “rising spirit” in the country, which she describes as: “A social restlessness, a political awareness, a concern – not necessarily beneficial – about the natives and the problems they present, an artistic awakening” (VS, 1985:43). The easy elision between social ferment and “artistic awakening” points to the social and political values at stake in debates about “art” in South Africa. This skirmish is part of the context for Campbell’s well-known epigram directed against Mrs Millin, “On some South African Novelists”:

You praise the firm restraint with which they write –
I’m with you there, of course
They use the snaffle and the curb all right,
But where’s the bloody horse? (CWI, 1985:176)

⁷⁴ Coetzee summarises the “tragedy” of miscegenation for Millin as follows: “The flaw in the blood of the half-caste is thus an instinct for death and chaos. It destroys the peace of the community by revisiting its repressed sins upon it, it drives the half-caste himself to a withdrawal from life. Mixed blood is a harbinger of doom” (Coetzee, 1988:152). He further points out that “racial purity” in Millin’s eyes is as important for the black man as it is for the white. In this aspect her argument comes close to Campbell’s pronouncements that the Zulu are “a nation of aristocrats” expounded in *Broken Record*.

dumb cattle, and the critic as the herder who directs them with his whip. Another infamous Plomer witticism, inspired by Hendrik Pierneef's copies of San rock-art images on the cover of the magazine, was his retrospective comment that "... perhaps like twentieth-century Bushmen [we] had left a few vivid paintings on the walls of that dark cave, the mind of the white South African" (*Double Lives* (1943:166) cited in *VS*, 1985:8). Once again, by identifying the *Voorslag* writers with "Bushmen" as the questers after knowledge and understanding, and the "white" mind as a "dark" space of ignorance and superstition, Plomer turns racial discourse inside out.

The idea of white South African society as brainless and inert is taken up in Campbell's satire *The Wayzgoose*, written later in 1926, in which the animal and vegetable qualities of the nation's thinkers become a sustained metaphor:

Where apples to the weight of pumpkins go
And donkeys to the height of statesmen grow,
Where trouts the size of salmon throng the creeks
And worms the size of magistrates – the beaks;
Where the precocious tadpole, from his bog,
Becomes a journalist ere half a frog;
Where every shrimp his proud career may carve
And only brain and muscle have to starve.
[...]
Where Pumpkins to Professors are promoted,
And turnips into Parliament are voted?
Where else do men by vegetating vie
And run to seed so long before they die? (*CWI*, 1988:67).

The concluding image in which men "vie" by "vegetating" ironically hints at Campbell's Darwinian and Nietzschean ideal of productive competition; an ideal honed in the context of an insipid and self-interested colonial art-world. It is also an ideal that is perhaps modelled on his own infectious, boisterous energy, which comes across in his letters, prose writing and poetry alike.

In his early South African essays, Campbell, like Plomer, transposes ubiquitous colonial primitivist imagery from black to white colonial society. In South Africa, and certainly in the letter pages of *Voorslag*, notions of "the primitive" typically served racist arguments for the superiority of white "civilisation". In this context then, Campbell argues forcefully against this sense of white racial superiority; a vision which critics often observe sits uneasily with his later and more vehemently essentialist pronouncements, especially in his

autobiographies.⁷⁵ For example, in his comments on “The Worship of Nature” by Sir James Frazer, published in the first number of *Voorslag* in June 1926, Campbell ridicules standard colonial discourse by reversing a social Darwinist argument:

We have no excuse for our parasitism on the native and the sooner we realise it the safer for our future. We are as a race without thinkers, without leaders, without even a physical aristocracy working on the land. The study of modern anthropology should be encouraged as it would give us a better sense of our position in the family tree of *Homo Sapiens* – which is among the lower branches: and it might even rouse us to assert ourselves in some less ignoble way than reclining blissfully in a grocer’s paradise and feeding on the labour of the natives. (*CW IV*, 1988:202)

From this description of the place of white colonials among “the lower branches” of the family tree of evolution, Campbell argues for a study of comparative religion “in a country like ours in which the laws are based still on the white man’s mental superiority to the native - a superstition which was exploded by science ten years ago and by Christianity two thousand years before” (1926:63), once again subverting the conventional application of the term “superstitious” to African belief systems, for rhetorical effect. Yet his ambivalence about indigenous, or “primitive”, belief systems is evident in this same essay. In a comment that reveals the seeds of the contradiction in his views, he argues:

Time has long gone by, thanks to Sir James Frazer and his fellow workers, when the beliefs of the ancient and existing pagan world could be dismissed as foolish and mischievous superstitions; for amid much that is crude and abominable there remains always something of moral and spiritual value, some germ from which has sprung the science and philosophy of other times. (*CW IV*, 1988:202)

This racist reference to “crude and abominable” pagan beliefs anticipates Campbell’s mounting critique of “primitivism” in contemporary European art and literature, to be discussed later in relation to his critique of D.H. Lawrence.

In *Voorslag*, however, Campbell pursues the representation of white colonial society as “superstitious” with energy and delight. For example, in a jaunty, rather silly essay entitled “Fetish Worship in South Africa: a skirmish on the borders of popular opinion”, published in the second issue of *Voorslag* (1926, 1(2):3-19), an argument is presented between a Reader (the representative of “popular opinion”) and the Writer (Campbell himself) who describes

⁷⁵ Robin Hallett for example, writes:

Campbell’s attitude towards Africans tended, Plomer remarked later, to be typical of that of white South Africans generally, ‘an amalgam of tolerance, contempt and impercipient’. Plomer, by contrast, saw Africans as human beings with ‘vast potentialities’ but ‘frustrated and wronged’. Under Plomer’s influence Campbell began, at least for a time, to change his ideas. (1978:34)

the figures of “civilisation” – “priests, politicians, journalists and military commanders” – as “witch-doctors and bogeymen”, who “jingle medals, wave flags, make fatuous prophecies” (1926, 1(2):6). The Writer argues that the notion of “civilisation” is put to dubious use, citing its role in justifying the last war as an example. His complaint is about varieties of “herd instinct”, such as the instinct to defend one’s own “civilisation”. When the Reader plaintively asks: “But surely you cannot see anything in going against the ways of your kind”, the Writer sets out what are some of the central tenets of Campbell’s manifesto:

There is nothing productive in making oneself part of a great human sausage machine which has neither rhyme nor reason. [...] As for there being anything creative or productive in my attitude, how do you imagine that man could ever have risen from the monkeys, if it were not for the few individualists that had the courage to step over the silly little boundaries of ape-life, and lead others after them. (1926, 1(2):7)

While the emphasis on Nietzschean individualism as the antidote to “herd” thinking is forwarded here in playful and ridiculous terms, it is a characteristic theme for Campbell, and informs much of his early poetry, as I will discuss in later chapters. Here, he clinches this exposition with a final absurd discursive flourish. The Writer presents his Reader with a photograph of a Wildebeest, which he describes as the model of a Nietzschean individual, free of debilitating “herd instinct”.

Whenever he wants to say anything, he says ‘Kngrrhr!’ He always says the same thing, like a politician, but he doesn’t contradict himself and is more concise. He hasn’t got any colour-prejudice or race-feeling. He doesn’t care a hang for fences, taboos and restrictions he just bounces gracefully over them, but he doesn’t entangle himself with them or try to break them. [...] He is a true Nietzschean, and I uphold him as an example to South Africa. Follow the Wildebeeste! His outlook is scientific and artistic. If we had nine or ten individuals such as he is among our population South Africa would be a different country. (1926, 1(2):12)

The extravagant paradox of choosing a herd animal to represent ideal human individuality foregrounds the absurdity of received ideas about race and society (the “herd”) which are allegedly cherished by the putative readers of Campbell’s magazine. It also promotes, in mock form, the notion of an outsider-artist figure as a panacea for the “herd instincts” of a society intent on self-preservation; this will become a serious theme in Campbell’s early lyrical poems.

The essay concludes with an exposition on the striving nature of “genius” which seems drawn from Nietzsche and Olive Schreiner in equal parts. Campbell invokes this unlikely conjunction of intellectual predecessors in order to shape his own vision of the value of

personal striving for human development; for Campbell, as for Schreiner, this is profoundly coloured by his irritation with the fattening comforts of white colonial life:

I believe that the power behind the universe is something better than an omnipotent old parson or predikant with a colour prejudice and a dirty puritanical mind. I believe that it is genius, the genius of Leonardo, Christ, and Goethe rolled in one and multiplied by infinity, a genius eternally striving towards some unattainable perfection, eternally coming short of it, and eternally striving towards it again. (1926, 1(2):17)

The reference to “unattainable perfection” here echoes the “quest” allegory in Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* in which the hunter-quester seeks the bird of truth, and dies in the attempt. He is vindicated in his faith in the bird’s existence, as one white feather descends before he dies.⁷⁶ This suggests that Campbell is serious about his notion of individual genius, and that he has a South African model for it in the form of the autodidact, highly independently minded novelist.

From these examples, it appears that Campbell’s critique of racist discourse in his South African essays derives from his Nietzschean ideal of independent-mindedness. It is less of a “principle” than an oppositional approach to the dominant and conventional discourses which use artistic debates as a platform. His serio-comic use of paradox and wit appears to be an instance of modernist adaptations of Renaissance techniques which effect a striking re-orientation of established ideas.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Both Campbell and Plomer hailed Schreiner as a genius, a free-thinker, and a key precursor for South African writers. She had died in Cape Town in 1921, and was buried at Buffel’s Kop, little more than a hundred kilometres from the farm on which Plomer lived in the early 1920s. Alexander suggests that Plomer thus “felt spiritually close to her” in his lonely years as a sheep farmer in the Eastern Cape (1989:59). Campbell’s reverence for Schreiner is expressed in his short poem “Buffel’s Kop”, a meditation on her grave-site which redeploys the allegory of the “bird of truth”.

⁷⁷ In his reflections on Desiderius Erasmus’s *The Praise of Folly* (1511), J.M. Coetzee considers the Renaissance use of comedy and foolery as a mode for exploring serious ideas – ideas which would acquire deadly weight in the ensuing religious politics of the Reformation. Without reading the text as “a premonition” of the crisis to come, Coetzee explores Folly’s monologic account of the license given to the “fool” to “criticize all and sundry without reprisal, since his madness defines him as not fully a person and therefore not a political being with political desires and ambitions. *The Praise of Folly* therefore sketches the possibility of a position for the critic of the scene of political rivalry, a position not simply impartial between the rivals but also, by self-definition, off the stage of rivalry altogether, a *nonposition*” (1996:84). In reading Erasmus’s text alongside contemporary theory (that of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Renee Girard), Coetzee places it in relation to two contemporary projects; Foucault’s attempt to “return authority to madness as a voice counter to the voice of reason”, and Lacan’s efforts to “reconceive a science in which the unconscious truly finds its voice” (1996:84). In the history of ideas sketched by Coetzee in this essay, the position beyond reason is associated not only with madness and foolery, but also with poetry, which is therefore banished by Socrates on the grounds that it will implement the rule of “pleasure and pain” rather than of “law ... and principles” (in Coetzee, 1996:90). That Campbell enjoys the mock-heroism and mock-sententiousness of fool-figures is most plainly evident in his character “Androgyno”, the mock-hero of *The Georgiad* discussed in chapter 1. While this does not describe Campbell’s intellectual path, Coetzee’s account of the appropriation of the Erasmian “non-position” to the violent pre-war political affect emerging in Europe in the 1930s is of great interest. He shows that the historian Johannes Huizinga rejected the “utterly unpolitical spirit” (1996:101) of Erasmus as inappropriate to an age of

Modernist versus colonial virility

Schreiner exemplifies a South African “tradition” of self-taught “genius” in the context of the intellectual isolation imposed on colonial writers; a counter-tradition to one which associates a distinctively “South African” sensibility with colonial masculinity.⁷⁸ Campbell takes issue with the argument in which colonial experience is seen to produce uniquely vigorous mental and creative powers among white South African men. An exchange in the “Letters” pages of *Voorslag* shows this discourse at work, and Campbell’s characteristic response to it.

In the second number of the magazine, Mr Erich Mayer⁷⁹ comments that, while the first edition admittedly shows “brilliant virtuosity of style”, the writer is:

[E]ntirely missing the virile spirit of our young South African culture, the acquaintance with the best of which made me desirous to support any venture breathing that spirit, in every possible way – finding it now supplanted by the disillusioned spirit of the aged and over-civilised countries of Central and Western Europe. I do not share the Oscar Wildean ideal of Art for virtuosity’s sake, but regard Art as the extreme effort to reveal the soul of a nation, in this case of the healthy and ascending South African nation. (1926, 1(2):67)

The remainder of his argument concerns the “ages” of civilisation, arguing ultimately for the superiority of the white colonial either to African indigenes or Europeans. The details become clear from Campbell’s entertaining retort in the following edition of *Voorslag*.

intense political tension, whereas by contrast Stefan Sweig, whom he describes as a citizen of “a cosmopolitan republic of letters” finds in Erasmus a panhumanism which he considers an antidote to the hatred of the age. Coetzee reads both positions as an appropriation of the Erasmian “non-position”, which is deeply resistant to “being read into and being made part of another discourse” (1996:103). Coetzee points to the ways in which the paradoxes of a deliberate “madness” of this Renaissance type (that is to say, a fooling about with the terms of “reason” rather than a fanatical, or passionate “madness” which Erasmus also rejects) forces reflection on the claims to “rightness” through “reason”.

Campbell’s “praise” of the wildebeest in the fake Socratic dialogue above can be read as an example of the mock-encomium or “laudatory composition” that flourished in the Renaissance uses of paradox to explore contemporary issues, of which Erasmus’s “*Encomium Moriae*” (*Praise of Folly*) is an example (see Levi, 1971:56).

⁷⁸ In her highly modernist sounding “Preface” to *The Story of An African Farm* (1975), Schreiner critiques the readerly demand for particular kinds of “South African” tales of adventure, and suggests that “daily life” does not conform to these demands. On a different note, Mark Sander’s (2000) fine essay on Schreiner’s problem of imagining herself within a masculinist intellectual tradition points to her outsider status within this tradition by virtue of her femininity. In Sander’s analysis, this bars her from conventional modes of knowledge-sharing between men, but also spurs some of her original directions of thought. One could argue that it changes her mode of storytelling. The unusual presence of two main protagonists in the novel, one male, but disempowered by his lowly status, the other female, relatively empowered by her desirable sexuality, but precluded from work or influence, suggests this.

⁷⁹ While I cannot confirm this, it seems likely that this Erich Mayer is the South African artist, who was born in Germany in 1876, and died in 1960. If so, he arrived in South Africa in the 1890s, and fought with a Boer commando during the Anglo-Boer War, was interned during World War I, after which he was allowed to return to South Africa where he toured the country and produced numerous rural landscape paintings. He was a friend and student of the well-known South African artist Hendrik Pierneef.

Sir-

I hasten to rescue the remains of Mr Mayer from the Charybdis of his colliding arguments. The argument by which he shows the superiority of Colonial to European culture is identically the same as that by which he shows the inferiority of native to Colonial culture. After claiming that we are so much 'younger' than Europe, he does not hesitate to claim that we are 2000 years 'older' than the native. However, he allows himself a margin of 1500 years and says we are '2000 or 500' years 'older' than the native. If 1500 years is of so little importance that it can be so sweepingly discarded, why make such a fuss about the remaining 500? If as Mr Mayer suggests the opinions of two of your leading contributors were formulated to catch the applause of European aesthetes, is it likely that we should be expounding them out here for the benefit of South African anaesthetes? Yet even a world-wide aesthetic reputation is less ignominious than the local anaesthetic oblivion which envelops most of the artistic efforts of Mr Mayer's young and virile culture. (1926, (3):59)

In opposing "virtuosity" to "virility" Mayer distinguishes between artistic performance and physical action. This telling antithesis may help to make sense of Campbell's own curious version of an apparent hypermasculinity. As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3, Campbell himself was hailed after the publication of *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924), at home and abroad, for displaying this kind of colonial "virility" and the poem sets out a theory in which the masculine energies of the South are seen to redeem the jaded and broken cultures of the North. Campbell does subscribe to a notion of a revitalised Southern world. Yet, as this letter and other comments reveal, he is at pains to show that he does not subscribe to the idea that white colonial manhood is exceptional or renovating either physically or intellectually. I suggest that this apparently self-contradictory stance makes sense if we consider the stately modernist nature of Campbell's project.

In this response to Mayer's letter, Campbell rejects the body/mind dichotomy, in which one set of faculties is arbitrarily (and with patent self-interest) valued at the expense of another: the "virile" male colonial body revitalises the jaded "overly intellectual" European, while the "virile" male colonial mind claims superiority over the body-bound, purely "physical" native. Whether the "mind" or the "body" is held up as the higher term depends only on the purpose it is meant to serve. Mayer's notion of "virility" does not signify Campbell's key (modernist) values – force, potency, originality – but rather a generic concept of manly vigour, drawn from colonial adventure fiction, as the letter makes plain. This notion of "virility" claims bodily experience as its source of authority; yet its source is neither body nor mind, but a pre-packaged genre of colonial "manly" fiction. As I shall argue in chapter 5, in relation to his later poetic volumes, *Mithraic Emblems* and *Flowering Reeds*, Campbell is indeed deeply concerned with a notion of culture in which physical and intellectual activity are mutually

supportive forms of creative self-expression. This premise seems to underpin his deep romance about Mediterranean culture, as expressed in *Taurine Provence* (1932). Yet he dismisses this particularly self-interested version of a related theory in the South African context.

Campbell's letter of rebuttal concludes with a sarcastic thrust: "Mr Mayer deplores our knowledge of European literature, art, and history. [...] Are we 'degenerating' into a nation of thinkers? No, we are too 'virile'" (1926, 1(3):59). In recasting the colonial fear of the "degeneration" of the white races from a decline into brute physicality, to a decline into "thought", Campbell foregrounds the bizarre logic in which both intellectual debate and contact with indigenous societies equally signify this threat.⁸⁰ "Virility" is shown to be an essentially meaningless term that collapses Mayer's "colliding arguments" into apparent coherence. With his witty use of satire, paradox and *reductio ad absurdum*, Campbell effectively exposes the dishonest and self-referential terms which sustain the claim that white colonial society is "superior" both to European and African civilisations. This, however, is not to say that he did not partake in these attitudes, as his ambivalent stance on "primitivism" shows.

The Romantic argument for "beauty in nature": Smuts and Holism

I want to consider two further, and partially related, themes that emerge in Campbell's responses to South African writing. These concern his reaction to "nature" writing on the one hand, and on the other his enthusiastic embrace of Afrikaans as a language imbued with "vitality" and freshness – an inherently modernist and renovating idiom.

The first number of *Voorslag* (1926) contained an essay entitled "Beauty in Nature" by General Jan Smuts. Plomer and Campbell were reluctant to publish this essay, but did so as a favour to Lewis Reynolds, who sought political support from "men of influence".⁸¹ Smuts

⁸⁰ Coetzee analyzes the overlay of eugenics, racial fears, and nineteenth century medicine and fiction in Millin's South African novel of 1924, *God's Stepchildren*. As Coetzee describes it, "the vocabulary of degeneracy ('bad blood', 'taint', 'flaw', etc.) was common to nineteenth-century medicine and naturalistic fiction and was still very much in the air in Millin's earlier years. The notion of degeneracy as a biological means whereby a legacy of evil may be passed on to succeeding generations was also so much part of the stock-in-trade of popular science, and fitted in so comfortably with Calvinist warnings of the visitation of the sins of the father upon the heads of the children, that it is not surprising that Millin came to adapt it to the perils of interracial intimacy" (1988:143).

⁸¹ Gardner and Chapman write in their "Introduction" to *Voorslag*: "Almost certainly the article in Number 1 by General J.C. Smuts ('Beauty in Nature') was included as something of a gesture. (Reynolds had been Smuts' secretary at the Versailles Conference in 1919, had political ambitions of his own, was on good terms with

argues here that “Beauty” inheres in the perception of a “Whole” which reflects the complementary arrangements of parts. He sets out his view of the limitations of a “scientific” (i.e. evolutionary) account of natural beauty, arguing that it exceeds its biological function. His article does not represent his argument in full, but ends with the plea “But I may be allowed to add that I have tried a fresh way of approach to it and other cognate problems in my forthcoming book on ‘Holism and Evolution’, to which I beg leave to refer any readers who might be interested in a subject which in itself is most entrancing, and, as leading to further problems lying beyond, most important and illuminating” (1988:16). The coy reference to “further problems lying beyond” might refer to the application of aesthetic and scientific principles to human society – here the troubled one of South Africa in the 1920s. In his satire *The Wayzgoose* (1928), written after his resignation from *Voorslag* in 1926, Campbell ridiculed General Smuts’ earnest exposition of this philosophy:

And one was there whom I had seen before,
 Full high in anti-climax he could soar
 And probe ‘behind the button’ Nature’s lore!
 Forgive me, Statesman, that I have purloined
 This deathless phrase by thine own genius coined,
 Seek on, ‘Behind the BUTTON’, in the Void –
 Until you come upon the works of Freud!
 Statesman-philosopher! I shake thy hand –
 All tailors envy thee throughout the land
 Whose BUTTON⁸²-HOLISM without reverse
 Undoes the Trousers of the Universe!
 Long be thy wisdom honoured, and thy race
 Renowned for flinging smuts in Beauty’s face! (CWI, 1985:79)

The satire of Smuts’ argument could be read as a comment on the absurd effort to see unity, harmony and ‘Holism’ in an obviously embattled social and political world. Tony Voss has shown that Campbell was alert to this political context, noting his epigrammatic response to the Bulhoek and Bondelswarts massacres in the early 1920s, and suggesting that these events were part of the context of his poems, “The Serf” and “The Zulu Girl”, two of his best known

Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog and Colonel F.H.P. Creswell, the leader of the South African Labour Party, and was conscious of the need for *Voorslag* to attract the favourable attention of men of influence, as indeed was Campbell in the initial stages of the venture” (1985:3).

⁸² In his article on “Beauty in Nature” in the first issue of *Voorslag* Smuts laid himself open to the “button-holism” pun with the following account of nature’s mysterious aesthetic motivations:

No doubt insects and birds with their undeniable sense of colour have been useful up to a point. But beyond that point there has been a lavish outpouring of Beauty in its inexhaustible riches which must be traced to deeper sources than the perception and appreciation of birds and insects. We have to look deeper for the true explanation of the aesthetic developments in Nature. The button has no doubt been pressed by quite ordinary means. But behind the button there is a great story which Science has not yet discovered. (1926, 1(1):5)

lyrics.⁸³ Smuts was both Prime Minister, and Minister of Native Affairs, and directly ordered the mechanised military attacks on the Bondelswarts people in then South-West Africa, for protesting a dog-tax imposed (May 1922), and on the “Israelite” religious community at Bulhoek in the Eastern Cape for occupying a commonage (May 1921). In both attacks, over a hundred people were killed outright, and many badly wounded. His decisions were never challenged in the South African Parliament, although the League of Nations came close to investigating the Bondelswarts massacre, but refrained from accepting representatives from the community, and let the matter drop. The historian Edward Roux concludes his account of these massacres as follows:

the father of the Mandate System [General Smuts] did not emerge well from the incident. And the poet Roy Campbell, when Smuts published his philosophy of Holism, found the apt comment:

*“The love of nature burning in his heart,
Our new Saint Francis offers us his book.
The saint who fed the birds at Bondelswart
And fattened up the vultures at Bulhoek.”* (1964:143)

For Campbell, then, Smuts’ aesthetic philosophy epitomizes the misanthropy he associates with a particular brand of Romantic aesthetic – one which he perceives, too, in the Georgian aesthetics of England in the 1920s. This association is partly the common ground he shares with Wyndham Lewis, as I will discuss later in this chapter. In *The Wayzgoose*, the critique of Smuts’ philosophy acquires a further dimension in the concluding lines in the Smuts section: “Let Plomer’s art as smutty filth be banned – And own us prophets in our native land!” (CWI, 1985:79). Smuts’ love for “nature” is further (perhaps unfairly) shown as the repressive force that authorises the nationwide reaction against Plomer, the philanthropist whose vision of inter-racial love as a solution to racial difference is generally deemed to be “smutty”.

“Newness” in South Africa: the “modernist” vernacular of Afrikaans

Campbell’s satire points to the link between Smuts’ Romantic nature aesthetic and the willed, but ultimately feeble impulse to heal, or rather gloss over, social wounds. However, General Smuts’ theory of “Holism” was to be applied a few years later to a situation which received Campbell’s wholehearted support; namely the cause of the newly recognized language of

⁸³ Voss writes:

The decade in which Roy Campbell made his first return to Natal was a period of intense oppositional political activity. Beginning with the Rand African miners’ strike of 1920 and the foundation of the CPSA [Communist Party of South Africa] in 1921, the decade rose to the zenith of the ICU [Industrial and Commercial Workers Union] in 1927. (Voss, 1988:3)

Afrikaans. In his article entitled “The Youngest Language of the Commonwealth”, Prof T J Haarhoff, an important figure in the Afrikaans language movement of the mid-1930’s, writes:

I believe in the Philosophy of the Whole, that General Smuts has applied to Biology and called Holism. That philosophy, as I have tried to show elsewhere, goes back in the theory to Plato, becomes the *humanitas* of Cicero, Virgil and Quintillian and the most truly educative and creative force throughout the history of culture. It is a force which the best minds in every age have apprehended and expressed in various forms. It has risen wherever the leaders of mankind have been endowed with imagination and goodwill and disinterestedness; it has declined whenever materialism and the short view of life have prevailed. It strives to discover the significant links and the true relations between things and men and nature. It is expansive and forward looking. It has faith. South Africa has achieved union in name but not in fact. The parts of the whole are still fragmentary and disruptive. (1936:53)

Haarhoff argues here for equalising the status of Afrikaans and English, on the grounds that this will unify a fragmented “whole” – his political claims are therefore made on aesthetic, and classical, grounds. But Haarhoff’s reliance on Smuts to make this argument offsets a tension in Campbell’s position: his interest is in the “newness” and “rawness” of Afrikaans, whereas Haarhoff and Smuts use classical references to frame the language as part of an established and existing “whole”. Campbell found the claims of the Afrikaans movement compelling, as his essay on “Uys Krige” (1935) in particular makes clear. He calls Afrikaans:

The vernacular of *living*, its words have never been etiolated in salons, or faded in drawing-rooms. It is a language of necessity, a human language, produced swiftly by the immediate and the intense experience of a fighting and working people. It has the sinewy simplicity and beauty of tools, the lean bleakness of arms – an elegance which far surpasses that of intentional or conscious ornament: just as a plain Roman aqueduct or bridge, built for mere utility, surpasses the elaborate structure, say of Durban Town Hall with its hundred paunchy cement cupids carrying (if I remember rightly) bunches of bananas and pineapples. That quality, I mean, which makes Van Gogh’s rustic chair worth a million Venuses by Leighton or Ophelias by Millais. (*CW IV*, 1988: 264, 265)

His interest in the language is expressed in modernist terms, which foreground immediacy of representation, urgency, spareness, utility – all features of a language that suit it to effective expression. This interest is clinched with reference to Van Gogh’s rustic chair, drawing on a brief modernist lineage reaching back to Impressionist representations of familiar objects, in contrast to the ornate fantasy objects of the pre-Raphaelite painters. In contrast to Smuts and Haarhoff, who appeal to the authority of the classics, Campbell presents a synchronic understanding of the history of language, seeking parallels of theme, and use – a language of “fighting working people” – rather than a sense of “development” from the classics through the high points of “civilisation”. Thus he seeks to establish a (paradoxical) tradition of

“newness”. In his essay on the new language of Afrikaans, Haarhoff cites Campbell’s comments on the language in a letter to him:

‘Coarse and healthy as a young colt, Afrikaans is just now in such a state as was the English language when Marlow first snaffled its jaws with thunder. Established by victory against terrible odds, and finally secure, it now presents itself to the intellect and the imagination, as before it was limited solely to the service of the heart and the will.’

Haarhoff then glosses Campbell’s comment as follows:

A proud prose, and words to make an Afrikaner feel proud of his language, as he is proud of a fellow-citizen who scorns to belong to those coterie-poets, who spin by the fireside their effete and subtle theories, but leaps, with a great cry, to greet the sun into the strong rhythm of elemental life. (1936:52)

In citing Campbell, Haarhoff draws on the cultural authority of a leading figure in South African English literature to back his claims for the equality of the two languages, and by implication, for political equality between the two cultures.⁸⁴ It is clear though that for Campbell the value of this young language lies precisely in its rebellious, headstrong, independent, and even neglected, aspects. The terms in which Campbell praises the emergent language, and Haarhoff’s own praise for “a fellow-citizen who scorns to belong to those coterie-poets, who spin by the fireside their effete and subtle theories” are bodily and elemental, and speak to Campbell’s vision of a transhistorical, transcultural “physical aristocracy”. Haarhoff’s own argument though reflects an idealist notion which leans on the universalising force of classical forms. While Campbell would by no means reject the legacy of classical European thought, the target of his satire in *The Wayzgoose* is of an abject vision of its allegedly “unifying” force. The idealist claims of Smuts, and later Haarhoff, seem designed to soothe an anxiety about the relative cultural authority of English and Afrikaans.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Haarhoff makes the political project of his unifying vision explicit: “It has been said that the struggle of cultures must result in the victory of one, English must conquer Afrikaans or Afrikaans English. That is not my vision of the future. We used to hear much of the two streams of culture. I maintain that two streams may keep their identity not in the sense of establishing a barrier between two races, but in the sense of fructifying the soil *of the same mind*” (1936:54).

⁸⁵ A Master’s thesis by Catherina Hurter in 1979 explores the stylistic parallels between Campbell and the so-called “Dertigers”, the major Afrikaans poets of the 1930s, I.D. du Plessis, C.M. van den Heever, W.E.G. Louw, Uys Krige, D.J. Opperman, Elizabeth Eybers and N.P. Van Wyk Louw among others. She argues that the translations and borrowings of Campbell and Krige from other western literatures have “enriched South African poetry” and left a notable trace on the works of some of these poets. Moreover, “Van Wyk Louw and Campbell introduced Nietzschean thought into this poetry...” (1979:140). While she observes that Campbell was not an “innovator of verse forms”, his flamboyant imagery and predilection for transforming nouns into verbs can be traced particularly in the Afrikaans South African writing of the period (1979:140).

Essays published in England, 1927 – 1932

In *Broken Record* (1934), Campbell repudiated the whole of his views expressed in *Voorslag*. “I have to admit that for six months in Africa I joined the universal ‘racket’ out of sheer moral exhaustion and defeatedness. Quarrelling with my father made me generation-conscious: there was an enormous wave of Hogarth Pressure and I simply surfed it, instead of swimming against it. When I look at the stuff I then wrote, I see how much more ‘fertile’ the line of least resistance (and most sensationalism) can be to an artist. I have destroyed all that I can of what I wrote then, and I have publicly recanted in the *Wayzgoose* by turning on my associates in *Voorslag*” (*CW III*, 1988:94, 95). I want to suggest that his experience of the South African debate about art and society in *Voorslag* forms an important background to Campbell’s evolving literary critical perspectives, which are at moments allied to Anglo-modernist ones – notably those of T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis. Campbell’s comments on “primitivist” thought, closely allied to his critique of neo-Romanticism and “nature poetry”, reveal the significance of context in his critical views, as well as his interest in the “classicist” principles of particular London-based literary modernists. In the section that follows, I will trace his comments on these themes, in relation to certain of his contemporary writers.

The critique of Georgian “nature” poetry

Writing in England in the late 1920s, Campbell again challenged prevailing public taste in art. In his essay on “Contemporary Poetry”, published in Edgell Rickword’s *Scrutinies by Various Writers* (1928), he argued that this had already been “predisposed by the appearance of Georgian poetry and the anthologies which derive from it” (*CW IV*, 1988:249). He lists the criteria that define “a poet” in England in the late 1920s:

1. Have you ever been on a walking tour?
2. Do you suffer from Elephantiasis of the Soul?
3. Do you make friends easily with dogs, poultry, etc.?
4. Are you easily exalted by natural objects?
5. Do you live in one place and yearn to be in another place?
6. Can you write in rhyme and metre?

Any of these conditions, combined of course with the sixth, if conscientiously complied with, is a safe passport to half a dozen anthologies”. (*CW IV*, 1988:249)

This list introduces the targets of his critique, namely belated “neo-Romanticism” and excessive sentimentality, particularly in relation to nature and animals. In this essay, he further complains that Georgian nature poetry expresses a form of misanthropy; a recurring

theme leading up to his defence of bullfighting against “animal rights” objectors in *Taurine Provence* (1932):

The conception of ‘Nature’ as a benevolent and all-powerful force, and of man as a hopeless, impotent, evil-intentioned, little ninny is very popular in all anthology-verse. It is usually accompanied by an unhealthy desire to lose whatever intellectual contours the poet may possess in blending with the All, the Whole etc. The conception of Nature as a benevolent protectress and of man as a ninny is quite false. ‘Nature’, as represented by rocks, trees and animals, is huge, unfeeling, a little stupid, and very dead. Man is considerably more alive than are dogs, nightingales and trees: he is also much more benevolent than ‘Nature’. (*CW III*, 1988:249)

The terms of the critique here closely resemble those of his attack on Smuts’ “Holism”. But in his criticism of the poet’s impulse to “blend” with “the All, the Whole etc”, Campbell joins his voice to those of other modernists, particularly Lewis and Eliot, who aim to challenge the enduring legacy of Romanticism as expressed in contemporary poetry. For Campbell, this “Romanticism” is associated with several “modern” movements – “nature poetry”, primitivism, Bergsonism, and a particular kind of social democratic “rights” culture applied to children, women and animals.

D.H. Lawrence and the critique of primitivism

Campbell’s response to artistic “primitivism” emerges most clearly in his comments on the work of the novelist and poet D.H. Lawrence. Here, too, he displays an intriguing ambivalence. In an early lecture delivered to the Durban Technical College in South Africa in 1925, and reprinted by *The Natal Witness* in March and April of the same year, he expresses his admiration for Lawrence:

Among the most important of the younger writers whose work has been directly influenced by Nietzsche is D.H. Lawrence, the most exasperatingly unbalanced of the moderns. In his rarer and more lucid moments he is a true Nietzscheanite, exulting in the verve and vigour of Nature. His best work, *The Ladybird*, stands comparison with the highest work in modern literature. He is a curious mixture of a healthy man and a neurotic. He is immensely prolific, but ten per cent of his work is rubbish. He can write in a finely sustained and poetical manner, but he can descend to such depths of sentimentality and vulgarity as would even horrify Mrs Wilcox or Ethel M. Dell. He is obsessed with Freudian psycho-analysis; and anyone who wishes to see the ‘poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling’ need only scan a few pages of his book *Fantasia of the Unconscious* to get the fright of his life. However, when so few people are attempting anything in a grand way, when people are so contented with carrying off things on a minor scale, the work of Lawrence presents a picturesque and imposing failure. He does not believe in the possibility of a creative evolution ... A great deal of Lawrence’s work deals with the struggles of instinctive and primitive individual against his own conventions, and the barrier set up by society. But in Lawrence the individual

generally emerges triumphant. ('Modern Poetry and Contemporary History' in *CW IV*, 1988:180, 181)

A year later, writing for *Voorslag* under the pen-name Lewis Marston, Campbell refers to Lawrence as a "vigorous forerunner" of a new generation of English poets, and the lone one (together with Hardy) who may be read on the Continent (*CW IV*, 1988:222,223).⁸⁶

In "Contemporary Poetry", written in England in 1928, Campbell still regards Lawrence highly, but with more specific reservations which will crystallise further as he comes to identify increasingly with Wyndham Lewis' critical stance. He connects Lawrence's primitivism to a trend in contemporary European writing:

The revolt against civilisation and culture which so strongly characterises much modern poetry is nothing more than a revolt of the emotions against the intellect, of the belly against the brain; and it is only tolerable when extremely well done. Mr Lawrence, who is perhaps the most poetically gifted writer of our time, and one who, like Rousseau, is an amazing mixture of the most piercing perceptions with the most absurd sentimentalities, has done as much as could be done by anyone in this direction, and his criticism of civilisation is of a lasting value, even if his suggested alternatives and remedies are valueless. (*CW IV*, 1988:250)

Lawrence's primitivism, for Campbell, is associated with a fashionable contemporary self-critique in England and Europe, "a revolt of the emotions against the intellect, of the belly against the brain". Here he responds directly to the European sense of the failure of its own "civilisation"; a self-critique partly related to altered perceptions of the human mind and of human society brought about by the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, psychology, "sexology" and art movements of the *fin de siècle*. All of these are lampooned along with

⁸⁶ This comment was made in an article entitled "'Eunuch Arden' and 'Kynoch Arden': Two Tendencies in Modern Literature" (1926, 1(2):32-38). The title of the piece implies Campbell's masculinist vision of modernism. In their "Notes on *Voorslag*", Gardner and Chapman observe that "Eunuch Arden" refers to "Osbert Sitwell's pamphlet ... *Who Killed Cock-Robin? Remarks on poetry, on its criticism, and, as a sad warning, the story of Eunuch Arden* (1921). Sitwell's pamphlet holds up, as examples of the second-rate in poetry, Tennyson's 'Eunuch Arden' and several poems by Georgian poets..." (1985:34). Tennyson's sentimental narrative poem concerns an altruistic husband who, having been shipwrecked on an island for many years, returns home to find his wife happily remarried. Not wishing to upset her happiness, he does not reveal himself to her but lives nearby until his premature death. The story presents his "heroic" masculinity as noble and selfless. Sitwell, by contrast, appears to have viewed it as castrated. None of Campbell's commentators explain the term "Kynoch Arden", which Campbell uses to describe the line from Rimbaud to Marinetti: "Rimbaud ... is the father of modern poetry. Futurism was merely a manoeuvre to get into line with Rimbaud. It was incoherent and it lacked stamina intellectually. But it was a gesture in the right direction and it was an excellent instrument of destruction. The dynamite of Marinetti has done its work. Kynoch Arden has supplanted Eunuch Arden" (1926, 1(2):38). I think that the association here is with the ammunition manufacturing company, "Kynoch", established in Birmingham in the early 1860s. Campbell may also have had the British automobile of the 1910s, the "Arden", in mind here, which would reinforce the image that a mechanistic and futurist energy has replaced Victorian (and Georgian) mush.

their representative professors (particularly Freud, Jung, Shaw, Russell and social theorists like Marie Stopes) in *The Georgiad*. The sense of a “crisis” of European civilization was obviously sharpened by the experience of World War I, and the shock not only of violence, but of extreme and widespread conflict internal to Europe. Campbell criticizes these academic “critics” of European civilization; and at the same time, like T.S. Eliot and others, he shares a profound sense that “progress” narratives have failed to improve life in Europe and thus the definition of its “civilization” must be sought along other lines.

In this essay of 1928, then, Campbell uses Lawrence to attack what he construes as a sentimental position which values “primitive belief” over European systems of knowledge:

Now that man has no longer to rely on, or to fight against, ‘Nature’, he trusts and confides in her. But man in his ‘natural’ (i.e. savage) state is extremely suspicious of ‘Nature’, and personifies its chief forces as evil spirits. The revolt of the romantic poet against civilisation and the mechanical world is, therefore, stupid. If civilised man could get ‘back to nature’, if the yearnings of the ‘back-to-nature’ poet could be fulfilled, human life would become one of abject terror and squalor, as it is among all primitive races. The white man’s medicine and magic are far more eagerly sought after by the most intelligent savages than are the simple joys of nature by the country poet [...]. (CW IV, 1988:250)

Here he enlists his colonial identity in the service of his argument. In the context of his experience of Bloomsbury and the literary coteries of England in 1928, he challenges what he sees as the fashion of undermining the figure of the civilized European, whereas in the context of white South Africa, he can without reserve criticize a smug sense of racial superiority. Implicitly, in claiming for himself this range of opinion, he invokes his multiple identities as the source of authority – English, colonial, and, at moments, “Zulu” – in order to sustain his critique of the wrongheaded primitivism of the “Romantic poet”. As I will show, though, the contradictions in his position are shared to an extent with other conservative contemporary artists and thinkers, and thus cannot only be accounted for with reference to context.

T.S. Eliot and the critique of “feeling” in poetry

While critical of Anglo-European “primitivism”, Campbell shared with his contemporary modernists a sense that the Victorian ideals of “progress” had failed, and along with them, an established set of artistic values had lost significance. His sympathies are with a “classical” response to this malaise, and his use of the term “Romantic” appears to bear the meaning of weak or sentimental thinking. His struggle with these terms becomes particularly clear in his comments on T.S. Eliot.

In “Contemporary Poetry” (1928), Campbell takes issue with the “Romantic” notion that poetry expresses a particular “mood”, or set of feelings. He describes Georgian poetry as “a literary ramification of the Boy Scout movement or the Open Air League: it expresses few sensations more subtle than could be experienced by a Boy Scout at a picnic or a camp in the country”. “Mood”, Campbell argues here, is not a poetic value. He develops this claim with reference to T.S. Eliot’s poetry, praised by critics for expressing the “feeling” of an age. This “feeling”, Campbell argues, is irrelevant – the point about Eliot is that he has mastered his craft: “If he had expressed the very opposite attitude with the same mastery he would have had the same following, and he would have been claimed by the younger post-war poets quite as fervently, as having voiced their most intimate sentiments and beliefs” (*CW IV*, 1988:252). Style, here, trumps “attitude” as the source of poetic “meaning”. This statement implicitly refers to Eliot’s own famous claim in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919) that poetry expresses a “medium”, rather than a “personality” or an “emotion” (1972:24).

However, in his commentary on Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land* in *Voorslag* written two years before this, Campbell joins the chorus of critics who praise Eliot for capturing the “feeling” of the age. He writes: “More than any other modern artist Mr Eliot has captured the brooding restlessness of the age: he has captured the gloomy introspection and bitter disillusionment of the youth of Europe” (1926, 1(1):59, 60). If the two reviews are taken together, Campbell can be seen as both critiquing and invoking “feeling” as a means of assessing poetry. I suggest that this contradiction is not only a case of his critical perspective “evolving” between 1926 and 1928. It relates to his struggle to establish the grounds for challenging a neo-Romantic aesthetic; a challenge which forms the common thread in his critiques of both South African intellectual life, and the Georgian artistic scene. This critique is necessarily both of an artistic method, and of an attitude to the contemporary world expressed in a particular “mood” or “feeling”. Campbell’s review in the first number of *Voorslag* argues:

Mr Eliot’s poetry is stunted, tortured, twisted. It is unpleasant, like dry clotted blood. Yet it is all the more valuable in that it is the blood of a human heart. There are enough of the hedge-songster school of poets to fill a large asylum, people who have the time to kindle with kindly warmth over daisies and buttercups when the world is rocking on precarious hinges. (1926, 1(1):62)

The comparison of Eliot’s poetry to “dry clotted blood” is striking, particularly in the light of Eliot’s notorious fastidiousness. The point though is that the “tortured, twisted” method produces a powerful reaction, which, in Campbell’s now familiar construction is the antidote

to “kindly warmth over daisies and buttercups”. The earlier review is just as alert to the question of method and form as “Contemporary Poetry”, while it draws attention at the same time to the “mood” of modern life that Eliot represents:

Mr Eliot has invented a new form in which he aptly captures the rhythms, the bewildering kaleidoscopic movement, of modern life. The sordid drifting of industrialised herds, the obscenity of the sham ideals of the crowd, the mental non-existence of the man in the street, the huge unwieldy paralysis of the gods, are flung before one in their grim reality: insisted on with a terrible mechanical reiteration: until one feels sick and giddy and shuts the book. (1926, 1(1):59, 60)

In these essays, then, Campbell is engaged with the tricky business of excluding “feeling” in favour of “form” as a criterion of assessing poetry; and his difficulties with this distinction resemble Eliot’s own struggle in the use of these terms.

In “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), Eliot had famously argued against the Romantic notion that poetry expresses “personality” or “emotion”, claiming rather that poetry is “an escape” from the personality of the artist. The aim of poetry is to produce a “poetic emotion” – an effect of the medium.⁸⁷ Where personal emotion is messy, unconscious, and fleeting, poetic emotion is a product of skilled artistic synthesis, it is detached from the ego of poet and reader, and can be reproduced by experiencing the work afresh.

Eliot’s theory of “impersonality” is often treated as a manifesto, one which directs the way in which his own poetry should be read. However, as critics have shown, this theory is riddled with contradictions. Maud Ellmann, for example, finds that as much as Eliot and his poetic mentor and friend, Ezra Pound, aim to banish “personality” in their aesthetic theories, “the theory... contradicts itself: and they often smuggle personality back into their poetics in the very terms they use to cast it out”. As she puts it:

As poets, both efface themselves through masks, personae, and ventriloquy, and the polylogue within their texts impugn the self’s domain. As critics, both suspect that writing is an act of self-estrangement – an agon with the other, the unconscious, and the dead – yet neither is willing to dethrone the author without salvaging a good deal of his former privilege.⁸⁸ (1987:2, 3)

⁸⁷ In Eliot’s words: “What happens is a continual surrender of himself [the artist] as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (1972:17). He represents this “extinction” of personality by comparing the artistic process to a scientific one: “The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together” (1972:19). Thus, he argues, the final poetic product does not derive from the artist’s “personality” but from his method of combining “artistic” elements into a new whole, arguing that “the poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality...” (1972:20).

⁸⁸ As Ellmann explains:

Eliot's resistance to a notion of a poetic "personality" derives from his critique of the time-philosophy of Henri Bergson, popular in the 1910s and 1920s, in which "time", in an aspect which Bergson names "dureé", is a function of consciousness. In this account, time is dependent on the human experience of it; a view that for Eliot and Lewis militates against what Lewis would call an "external" view of things. For Eliot, "impersonality" in the work provides a stable and "objective" creative process. For Lewis, though, the antidote to Bergsonian flux is satire, humour and caricature.⁸⁹ Like Eliot, Lewis attacks Bergson in his book *Time and Western Man* (1927), as representing the modish philosophy in which much contemporary thought is rooted. Lewis, like Eliot, had heard Bergson's lectures at the College de France when he lived in Paris between 1904 and 1907; also like Eliot, Lewis's later anti-Bergsonism appears to be a repudiation of his earlier influence. James Mansell suggests that "despite his later claim in *Time and Western Man* that he [Lewis] knew 'very little' of him [Bergson] (*TWM* 159), it is evident from the very earliest days of *Blast* (1914-1915) that Bergson's ideas exerted an important influence on him and on Vorticism" (2011:112). At the same time, in *Men Without Art* (1934) Lewis critiques Eliot's version of an anti-Bergsonian theory; a critique which anticipates some of the later twentieth century accounts of the internal contradictions in this high modernist doctrine. Eliot's theory of "impersonality" is a cornerstone in his critique of Bergson as heir to Romantic literary theory and its association with authorial "personality". Lacking Eliot's philosophical training and prowess, Campbell approves his theory almost instinctively; but for him this vague and broadly defined "Romanticism" fails not because of its philosophical limitations, but because it supports what he sees as a particular form of misanthropy. This seems to begin with a repudiation of a sense

Although they hesitate about the poet's role, grudging to admit his centrality, they both admit with Yeats that the living person differs from the writing self, and differs radically from the personality composed upon the page. A poet, says Yeats, "never speaks directly": "he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete." But Yeats also argues that the poet "writes always of his personal life", so that the poem still originates in the experiencing subject, "completing" rather than dislodging him. This subterfuge is typical of Eliot and Pound's poetics too. In spite of these inconsistencies, however, the notion of impersonality is crucial to modernist aesthetics, and it is more valuable to trace the logic of its contradictions than to flounder 'in the hope of straightening things out'. (1987:3)

⁸⁹ Ellmann describes the Bergsonian account of personality in the following way:

Bergson devised his theory of duration to prove the continuity of personality: for he believed that time is cumulative rather than linear, and that the present is "swollen" with the past. Like Stephen (Dedalus in James Joyce's *Ulysses*), Bergson attributes personal identity to memory; but, in his philosophy, the I that was interpenetrates the I that is without the slightest gap or punctuation. He denounces the linear idea of temporality as a "bastard concept", engendered by confusing space with time. This mistake has blinded Western thought to personality: for its philosophers have either given up the subject in despair, or rescued it posthumously through the apotheosis of the "soul". Whether they idealise or deny the self, they all treat time as a trajectory of points in space, discrete, deprived of rhythm, shot with gaps. (Ellmann, 1987:10)

of self, at both a personal and a cultural level, in favour of something “out there”, “not here”, whether this be animals, nature, or “primitive” people. What is interesting in the case of Campbell is how this set of terms serves his different critiques of both colonial and metropolitan artistic and social values.

Campbell and Eliot: artistic personality, and the failure of “progress”

While their significance as critics is not comparable, the tangential relationship between Campbell and Eliot (an important relationship for Campbell’s career) highlights the contradictions inherent in their respective efforts to liberate themselves from Romantic aesthetic terms. Campbell and Eliot had reviewed one another’s works in positive ways. According to the editors of Campbell’s *Collected Works*, Campbell’s early admiration of Eliot’s poetry was reciprocated by the established poet:

In turn Eliot admired much of RC’s work, praised “Tristan da Cunha” (*New Statesman*, 22 October 1927), accepted the volume *Adamastor* for Faber and Faber after Jonathan Cape had rejected the poems, and later as director of Faber negotiated the contract for the volume *Talking Bronco* (1946). (*CW IV*, 1988:629)

This mutual interest is surprising, as their poetic practices seem poles apart in relation to the question of “personality”. The speakers of Campbell’s monologic poems deploy heroic speaker figures, often facing elemental foes, and who can (too easily perhaps) be identified with the poet himself, in contrast to the anti-heroic speaking voice of Eliot’s “The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock”, or the polylogue of *The Waste Land* (1922), with its urban focus, and its fragmentary representation of literary cultural history. Their self-representations also differ starkly. Campbell’s autobiographies, *Broken Record* (1934) and *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), both promote a series of legends about himself, and serve to consolidate the conflation of Campbell the Man and Campbell the Poet (see chapter 1). By contrast to this mythologized extroversion, T.S. Eliot had a reputation, equally self-mythologizing perhaps, for privacy and inscrutability.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Hugh Kenner’s *The Invisible Poet* (1959) implies this aspect of Eliot in its title. Based on an account of his first meeting with Eliot in the mid 1950s, Hugh Kenner (1998) claims that it was not possible to “meet” Eliot; “one met a role, of which the Possum had a variety, as for instance the Archdeacon, the Publisher, the American in Europe. But one never met the Poet” (1998:82). This he illustrates with an account of his first dinner with Eliot, here in the guise of London Clubman; Kenner felt himself cast as Huck Finn. “Clubman Eliot first interpreted the menu. ‘Now there is jugged hare. That is a very English dish. Do you want to be English? Or do you want to be ... safe?’” (1998:83). This is followed by an entertaining account of Eliot’s confrontation with a cheese platter, following which Kenner visited Wyndham Lewis, and recounted the evening’s proceedings. Lewis’s response suggested that there might indeed have been an Eliot beyond the guises: “‘Oh, never mind him,’ said Lewis. ‘He’s like that with everybody. But he doesn’t come in *here* disguised as Westminster Abbey’” (1988:84, 85).

While Campbell is not an “impersonal” poet, he is engaged in this debate about the role of subjectivity in writing and its relationship to the “objective” world. Like Eliot, Campbell upholds a paradoxical blend of “tradition” and “newness” as the antidote to subjective flux.⁹¹ He shares with Eliot a critique of neo-Romantic notions of artistic creation, as well as a curious anti-historical vision of history. In his *Voorslag* review of *The Collected Works of T.S. Eliot*, he argues:

The publication of ‘The Waste Land’ marks a new era in English Poetry. It is one of the most relentlessly honest works of the age. For in it the spirit of historical culture is made to recognise its futility: the soul of man shrinks horrified from the gulf to which it has been advancing so unconsciously with flags and banners for the last two hundred years. Mr Eliot’s enormous erudition and imaginative power concentrate with a horrified and hypnotised glare on the naked spectre of the truth. One hears the crash of falling ruins, the querulous expostulation of the old ideals and idols against the powers of a new and inscrutable darkness. (1926, 1(1):59, 60)

In this account, the strength of Eliot’s modernism lies in its critique of “the spirit of historical culture” which marches towards a spiritual “gulf” under the delusion of progress. For both Eliot and Campbell, the radically “new” is ahistorical; “historical culture”, which for Campbell at least is associated with notions of progress which have a particular inflection in the South African context, has not only proved damaging and cynical, but is the obstacle to “new values”. As Campbell concludes his review:

To read Mr Eliot’s poems is to realise the necessity for new values in modern life. There must be a great destruction in the human consciousness: we must gibe, sneer and ridicule our venerable reviewers into epileptic fits: we have plenty of muck to clear out of the way before we can start the great work of reconstruction. (1926, 1(1):62)

In very different ways from Eliot, there is central contradiction between Campbell’s own critical theory, and the ways in which he has been figured and indeed represents himself in the critical literature. As has been noted in chapter 1, he is often described as a “late Romantic” poet and regularly compared to Byron, for example; his poetic themes of the force of individual genius, and the poet as redeemer of a fallen world (see chapters 3 and 4) are consonant with the works of the Romantics, especially Shelley and Byron. His letters show great admiration for Shelley and Keats in particular, although in his critical reviews, he engages primarily with moderns.

⁹¹ Ellmann’s study of the literary idea of “impersonality” situates it as a response to a decontextualized world, in which the given social supports of identity seem absent. As she comments:

Both Eliot and Pound demote the self in favour of tradition, which they insinuate is on the wane. They may be right: for modernism fights its battles over subjectivity because it has deprived itself of almost any other ground. György Lukács, for example, complains that modernism focuses exclusively upon the self, denuding personality of every social and historical appurtenance. And the more the text revolves around the self, the more fragmentary that self appears. (Ellmann, 1987:8)

As noted, however, much of Campbell's early criticism takes a "modernist" position against the "flux" model of consciousness, associated with Bergson, as well as with a range of "rights" discourses which Campbell loosely designates as a "Romantic" outlook. Where Eliot levels his challenge against Bergson in philosophical and aesthetic terms, Campbell's one is expressed in broad oppositional sweeps which perhaps make the contradictions in his pronouncements appear more overt. As I will show in the discussion of Campbell's poetry, while he shares the modernist rejection of the "healing" analogies between poet/ viewer and world spirit – analogies resurrected in Smuts' "Holism" – his earlier poetry to an extent deploys the Romantic notion of a redemptive and hieratic poetic genius, modified in keeping with the spirit of his time in particular by the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Charles Baudelaire.

Modernist critiques of Romanticism

In rejecting "neo-Romantic" ideas of art (or, in Daniel Albright's formulation, art that draws on "wave" theory as allegory), modernist critics attempt to repudiate a comforting sense of a restorative equivalence between the world and the art-work through the poet's ability to invoke, embody and express a unified notion of "World Spirit". For Michael North the legacy of Romantic thought is one of a wilful impulse to overcome the "bifurcations of modern life" through aesthetic harmony. He cites Terry Eagleton's suggestion that, since the late eighteenth century, it is "the special province of aesthetics" to reconcile the philosophical split between object and subject, and between similarity and difference (1991:15). This position is set out in M.H. Abrams' account of the task of all "post-Romantic" poetry, in his essay "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric", which North summarizes as follows:⁹²

Abrams defines a genre of poetry in which the epistemological opposition of subject and object and the modern estrangement of humans from nature are resolved in a poetic structure whose organic form perfectly mingles part and whole. According to the theory, philosophical and social conflicts are resolved aesthetically in a form whose harmony is guaranteed by its autonomy. (1991:15)

For Eliot and Lewis, this elision between the world and the knowing subject is deeply problematic. But, as North shows, in spite of its apparent repudiation of Romantic ideas of

⁹² A related argument is made along different lines by Leo Bersani, in his book, *The Culture of Redemption* (1990). Here he uses the psychoanalytic theories of Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott, among others to critique the "reparative" impulse of certain modernist narratives.

the relationship between the self, the world and the work, modernist poetry recapitulates the same problem. It presents a tension between “opposites” which certain critics have interpreted as a reconciliation between the particular and the universal.⁹³

With reference to Ezra Pound’s efforts to track a path between the impressionism of Ford Madox Ford and the symbolism of Yeats (both of which he purports to reject), and the painterly and sculptural forms of Gaudier-Breszka and Lewis, which he embraces, Michael Levenson suggests that the problem Pound is negotiating can be explained schematically as a “chain of signification”:

Poet – word – world – essence. Yeats had insisted on carrying literature all the way through this chain, from the poet’s intuition to the spirit’s essence. The poet spoke the word to evoke an object that might symbolize an essence. Pound and Ford had, in effect, refused this last step, halting at the natural object, content to disregard the invisible essence. They made their attack on symbolism from the point of view of realism, and through the Imagist and Impressionist propaganda of 1912 and 1913 runs an aggressively mimetic assumption. Words name things. Or, in Fenollosa’s revision, words name actions. (1984:131, 132)

It might be argued that Campbell takes this “aggressively mimetic assumption” one step further – in his theatrical world view, words *are* actions, and actions, in their turn, are statements. He states in *Broken Record* (1934) that “there is no difference at all between a verb and an act” (*CW III*, 1988:152) and he seeks to confirm this in the 1930s by evolving an understanding of “culture” in which poetry and physical action (particularly equestrian and taurine “sports”) exist within the same field, and draw authority and significance from, their mutual reference (see chapter 5). In his conception of poetic practice, both verbal and physical risk-taking, too, are elements of a “signifying chain” which leads from poet to word to experience – and perhaps also to an external reaction which confirms the efficacy of the chain. Certainly there is resonance between Campbell’s theory of what constitutes poetic effect and the theories of other modernist poets. As with some of his contemporaries, his own linguistic idealism belies his efforts to reject the parallel idealisms of the Romantic movement.

⁹³ North cites readings by Schwartz and Levenson as examples. Levenson proposes that Eliot’s poem “The Waste Land” can be read as balancing “radical individualism” with a quest for “objective principles” (North, 1991:16). But it should also be noted that in his *Genealogy of Modernism*, Levenson offers a fine discussion of the internal tensions in modernist literary doctrine. In tracking Pound’s position between the years 1912 and 1915, Levenson shows “a persistent ambiguity in early modernism: the desire for the autonomy of form and the claim that the root of source and justification for art is individual expression” (1984:135).

North is rightly sceptical about such an apparent reconciliation between word and essence, and argues that poetic devices that claim to achieve this merely serve to foreground the impossibility of the attempt. He adds that there is necessarily a social programme involved in such aesthetic claims:⁹⁴

Claims that modernists like Yeats, Eliot and Pound offer aesthetic resolutions of the tension between part and whole, fact and myth, personality and impersonality are inseparable from the claim that they also offer social reconciliations of unity and difference. (1991:16)

Modernist efforts to untangle aesthetics from Romantic thought manifest in a range of interesting ways. In his essay, “The Critique of Romantic Ideology”, Christopher Norris suggests that Paul de Man makes an analogous argument to Ellmann’s in which he shows how Eliot and the New Critics, in their efforts to resist Romantic aesthetic philosophy in fact recapitulate its redemptive terms. For example, de Man critiques the redemptive powers invested in the Symbol in Hegel’s idealist aesthetic; a notion with strongly Romantic roots.

Norris argues:

For ‘symbolic art’ is that which not only reconciles mind and nature [like metaphor in the passage from Abrams above], but also incorporates a power of inward or phenomenological reflection on its own nature, history, and genesis. In de Man’s words:

the commanding metaphor that organizes this entire system is that of interiorization, the understanding of aesthetic beauty as the external manifestation of an ideal content which is itself an interiorized experience, the recollected emotion of a bygone perception. (1988:31, 32).

Thus, according to these critics, there is a paradox internal to modernist aesthetic theory which wishes to both disavow and recapitulate the (Romantic) willed reconciliation between word and world through the operations of language; a gesture which, in spite of themselves, certain modernist artists repeat in avant-garde terms. This philosophical impulse found concrete expression in the responses of many British writers to the Spanish Civil War, which held the promise of putting “art” to the service of social life, and thus effecting a more tangible version of this reconciliation, in this case of artistic with political ideals. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

⁹⁴ Similarly, Ellmann shows the political impulses behind the doctrine of “impersonality”. In her account, it emerged as the equivalent in art to a crusade against Romantic individualism in society. It was T.E. Hulme who imported this crusade to England from the reactionary *philosophes* of L’Action française ... [who] argued that political reform entailed a unilateral purgation of the intellect. Later, Eliot and Pound also found it empowering to operate on this extended front, and to explore the interpenetration of cultural domains. In their work, the banner of impersonality unites the realms of poetry, aesthetics, philosophy and politics, and each instils the others with a borrowed vehemence. (1987:5)

Ellmann, North, Anthony Woodward and others all point to the social programme implicit in the rejection of “Romanticism” – in Eliot for example, it is in purifying “the dialect of the tribe”, salvaging it from the privacy associated with “personal” expression, that meaning can be restored to language, and with this, “order” and “coherence” to society.⁹⁵ For Campbell, however, the most influential views on aesthetics and society came from his alarming but compelling friend, Wyndham Lewis.

Campbell and Wyndham Lewis

Lewis was the metropolitan modernist with whom Campbell was most deeply engaged during the late 1920s and early 1930s. They had been friendly since Campbell’s first arrival in England, and maintained close ties after the Campbells left England in 1928, after which Lewis visited them on occasion at their homes near Martigues, Provence.⁹⁶ The first of these

⁹⁵ This famous, or infamous, phrase derives from Eliot’s extended poetic series, *The Four Quartets* (1944). Shiach (2007) points out that this phrase should be taken in the context of Eliot’s literary predecessors. Of particular relevance was the work of the French Symbolist Mallarmé and his interest in the poetic potential of the English language, which, unlike French, bore traces of a variety of languages, whereas French had been “purified” and codified in the 16th century to stabilise its uses and meanings (2007:29). A further, even more contemporary, context for Eliot’s interest in the “purity” of English speech – the material of English poetry – she points out were the movements of the early twentieth century to establish a linguistic medium of communication that was both democratic and international – a movement with obvious roots in political concerns about national conflict. The two examples she cites of these are the attempts to develop a lingua franca, Esperanto, and the BASIC English movement (British American Scientific International Commercial) defined as “English made simple by limiting the number of its words to 850 and by cutting down the rules for using them to the smallest number necessary for the clear statement of ideas” (I.A. Richards, *Basic English and its Uses*, 1943:20 cited in Shiach, 2007:26). Shiach further points out that this movement: “is closely connected to the broader philosophical investigations into the nature of meaning conducted by Ogden and Richards in the early 1920s. In a text such as *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language Upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, Ogden and Richards lay out a view of the nature of language and in particular of the domains of the symbolic and the emotive in language, which was to provide the intellectual framework for much critical engagement with the developing practice of modernist poetics” (2007:25).

⁹⁶ Teresa Campbell described Lewis’s visits to them at Tour de Vallier near Martigues in 1929 as follows:

Because my parents shed this highly artistic aura, they were much sought after by the writers and artists of the time. Some stayed in a spare room we had outside, others were too swanky and used to stay at the luxury hotel in Martigues. Of these people Wyndham Lewis left the clearest memories, perhaps because he was the most striking. He had a mysterious mien, accentuated by his dark appearance and black hat. His visits were rare but very precious to my father. It was not difficult to see they had a profound understanding and affinity. They could talk concentratedly in low voices for nights on end. This attachment lasted for years until Lewis turned “pink” and their friendship cooled off. (2011: 185)

Tess also mentions visits by Liam O’Flaherty, Hart Crane, Aldous Huxley, Augustus John, Armand Guibert, Uys Krige, and the French critic Pierre Maillot during this period. Her sister, Anna, was also struck by Lewis, speaking of him as “a favourite with all our family”. She claims that:

Roy warmed the cockles of Lewis’s rather cold heart. He was attractive with his dark eyes and mocking smile, rather like an intellectual Clark Gable, if one can imagine such a thing. He and Roy were the same height, and they were equally well-matched intellectually. Both brilliant satirists, their conversation, in those halcyon days, must have been like a gorgeous display of fireworks. Long into the night they talked, drank, laughed and sang in Homeric feasts of wit. Roy’s voice boomed up the stairs and competed with the Mistral in relentlessness. Towards dawn, when Tess and I were preparing to get up, there would descend a sudden silence: the poets had fallen asleep. But by about ten a.m. they were up again and ready to set off for Martigues. (2011:32)

visits, in mid-July of 1930, according to Alexander, was to plan their work on *Satire and Fiction* (1982:117) (also fictively “recorded” by Lewis in *Snooty Baronet*) and Anna Campbell Lyle remembers an “extended” visit from Lewis in 1931 (2011:34). In 1930 Campbell was commissioned by Chatto and Windus to work on a monograph on Lewis, intended to be No. 14 in a Dolphin Books series of writers on other writers, and announced on the jacket of previous books in the series as “an estimation of one modern by another” in which “Mr Campbell endeavours to assess at their true value the baffling talents, creative and critical, which have made Mr Lewis the most prominent controversialist of our time and one of its most original writers and artists” (cited in Meyers, 1985:xiii). The page proofs of this text were printed in April 1932, but then it was withdrawn from publication in June 1932, due to an action against Lewis by Chatto and Windus for breach of contract (Meyers, 1985:xiii). The booklet was lost until after the publication of Alexander’s biography of Campbell (1982) and Meyer’s biography of Lewis (1980), when three sets of proofs turned up.⁹⁷ As Meyers notes, Campbell was the first writer to compile a comprehensive guide to Lewis’s oeuvre, and perhaps also the most sympathetic. In his review of the newly published monograph, Anthony Woodward comments on its significance for both men:

This booklet – Campbell’s only extended account of Lewis, re-discovered after fifty years – demonstrates that in Lewis Campbell had found a mentor, and that in Campbell Lewis had found a friend: a commodity of which he was short, due to chronic verbal aggressiveness and intermittent paranoid behaviour. [...] Until Campbell arrived Lewis was a one-man coterie; arguably a rather glorious one. (1985:204)

Anna describes the connection between Lewis and Campbell as almost “telepathic” to the extent that they would write about the same things, separately. She cites as an example their simultaneous work on their Bloomsbury satires, *The Georgiad* and *The Apes of God*. She further indicates that it was Lewis who generated Roy’s interest in politics; in her view, an “unfortunate” effect of their friendship (2011:33, 34).

⁹⁷ Lewis had offered his work to a different publisher, without being able to repay an advance from Chatto. Meyers reports that he visited both Mrs Lewis and Mrs Campbell, and neither possessed a manuscript of the book. Both women died in 1979. Meyers knew that Chatto had returned proofs to Campbell in 1932, and that he had offered the manuscript to Boriswood and Cape, after its rejection by Chatto. However, “After *The Apes of God*, *Hitler* and Lewis’ numerous libel suits and suppressed books during the 1930s...” no publisher wanted a monograph on him (Meyers, 1985:xiii). Meyers looked for the pamphlet in the archives of Chatto, Cape and Bodley Head, which had taken over Boriswood, with no results. Following the publication of his Lewis biography, he was told by John Martin of the Black Sparrow Press in Santa Barbara, who was a collector of Lewis manuscripts, that he had bought page proofs of the manuscript with Lewis’ corrections from a London dealer. Martin sold these to Ellsworth Mason, the rare books librarian of the University of Colorado, who had amassed a large Campbell collection. Mason sold his entire collection to the Humanities Research Centre at Austin Texas. These are the proofs predominantly used by Meyers. Before her death Mary Campbell had somehow also discovered proofs with corrections by Campbell, which she sent to Michael Chapman to be included in Volume III of the *Collected Works* (1988). A third set of proofs, with different corrections by Campbell, meanwhile had been sold by an American collector of Campbell’s works to the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown. (Meyers, 1985:xiv)

Campbell's friendship with Lewis is often mentioned by critics, but little has been written about its significance for either writer. While Campbell makes a fine cameo appearance in Wyndham Lewis's autobiography *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937) his name does not appear in many works on Lewis, such as, for example, the one by Kenner (1954), Jameson (1979), or more recently, by Schenker (1992), or the very recent collections of essays by Carmelo Cunchillos Jaime (2007) or by Gąsiorek, Reeve-Tucker and Waddell (2011). A journal article by Parsons (1971), and Woodward's (1985) review of the monograph, gives some sense of the intensity and relevance of their friendship and literary collaboration in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁹⁸

Despite Campbell's recent absence from Lewis studies, Lewis clearly took an interest in him – whether this was literary-philosophical, or merely one of personal liking. Lewis included the figure of Campbell in several of his works – as “Zulu Blades” in *Apes of God*, and as Rob McPhail in *Snooty Baronet*, among other novels.⁹⁹ The thought of the two of them together is intriguing enough, one would have thought, to have provoked more commentary than there is on the connection – the dark, satirical, bitterly acute Lewis, and the large, bluff, he-man raconteur, Campbell. Jeffrey Meyers suggests that the comment of the narrator, Snooty, of *Snooty Baronet* about the character Rob McPhail expresses Lewis's feelings for Campbell: “I am astonished at the likeness [between us]. It is on account of this I value him so much I think. I feel towards him as I should towards a brother” (quoted in Meyers, 1985: viii,ix). In a letter written to Campbell in 1951, thanking him for a positive review of a re-issued edition of *Tarr* in *Time and Tide*, Lewis comments: “To find you still at my side is a matter of the greatest satisfaction to me: and I hope we shall always remain comrades-in-arms against the forces of Philistia” (Meyers, 1985:x). The phrase “comrades-in-arms” points to their joint perception of Campbell as a “warrior” or, literary bodyguard, acting on Lewis's behalf, as well as to their mutual affinity for Lewis's key notion of himself as the “Enemy”. But this figure of the “Enemy” had different meanings for each writer, as I hope to show below.

⁹⁸ As Parsons notes, Campbell does appear in an early study of Lewis by Geoffrey Wagner (1957), and his name turns up intermittently in Lewis's letters from the 1920s until the deaths of both men in 1957 (cf Rose, 1963).

⁹⁹ According to Anna Campbell Lyle, Campbell complained that Lewis was always “Killing him off in his books. He certainly does this in SNOOTY BARONET and REVENGE FOR LOVE” (2011:33). Anna also claims that: “When Lewis lay dying in the arms of Ashley Dukes, he said, “I really loved Roy...” – quite an admission from the man, who more than anyone else, prided himself on having no heart whatsoever” (2011:35).

Literary “comrades-in-arms”: Reviews, monographs, and Satire in Fiction

In his introduction to Campbell’s *Wyndham Lewis*, Meyers summarizes Campbell’s account of Lewis as follows:

Campbell shows that Lewis’ attack on primitivism in *Paleface* (1929), on ‘elephantiasis of the unconscious’ in *The Dithyrambic Spectator* (1931) and on the youth cult in *Doom of Youth* (serialized in *Time and Tide* in 1931 and published as a book the following year) were all part of his consistent defense of the intellect. All these works evolved from *Time and Western Man* (1927), where Lewis argued that ‘modern science, art, and politics, whether consciously or not, all conspire mutually to create an *unreal* state of mind in which the Sentimental and the Illusory can flourish better than anything else’. (Meyers, 1985:xviii)

This synopsis reflects Campbell’s engagement with Lewis in 1930, which had become increasingly sympathetic, and embroiled in Lewis’s own obsessions and terminology. During the period 1928 – 1931 Campbell reviewed his friend’s work several times, twice in *The New Statesman* (“‘The Emotional Cyclops’: *Time and Western Man*”, 3 Dec 1927, and “‘White Laughter’: *Paleface*”, 20 July 1929). In his review of *Time and Western Man* (1927), Campbell critiques Lewis for his “ubiquitous” diagnosis of the “time problem” in modern literature. He complains that “Mr Lewis, whenever he is confronted by any literary weakness such as the impediment in Miss Stein’s prose (which may be merely congenital) immediately blames it on the Time-mind. He is always smelling – or in view of Mr Lewis’s Eye should we say seeing? – a rat. But it is always the same rat: to him the Time-rat is ubiquitous, and he *sees* it in everything” (1927, in *CW III*, 1988:237). Given the sweeping scope of *Time and Western Man*, Campbell’s comment here seems fair, but probably also reflects his distance from Lewis’s “anti-Bergsonian” position at this point in his career. In his introduction to *Time and Western Man*, Lewis gives the following synopsis of his argument:

In Book I, the time mind, as I have called it, is considered in its more concrete manifestations – as we find it, notably, in works of fiction, poetry or painting. In Book II, the significance of all that type of belief and feeling which can conveniently be marshalled under the concept ‘Time’, is examined in detail. How the ‘timelessness’ of Einsteinian physics, and the time-obsessed flux of Bergson, merge in each other; and how they have conspired to produce, upon the innocent plane of popularization, a sort of mystical time-cult, is shown. How history and biography, and more particularly autobiography, are, more truly than anything else, the proper expression of this *chronological* philosophy, is canvassed in the literary criticism of Book I, and in the analysis of Spengler’s ‘world-as-history’ doctrine in Book II. (1927:3)

Campbell’s early critique of *Time and Western Man* takes issue both with the sweeping nature of the argument (“Mr Lewis reminds one of a medical specialist who diagnoses the same disease and prescribes the same medicine for all his patients” (*CW IV*, 1988:236) but

also with Lewis's location of his point of view as a visual artist. Lewis argues in the *Preface* to the book that:

The main characteristic of the Time-mind from the outset has been a hostility to what it calls the 'spatializing' process of a mind *not* a Timemind. It is this 'spatializing' capacity and instinct that it everywhere assails. In its place it would put the Time-view, the flux. It asks us to see everything *sub specie temporis*. It is the criticism of this view, the Time-view, from the position of the plastic or the visual intelligence, that I am submitting to the public in this book. (1927:3, 4)

Campbell takes exception to this privileging of the "visual intelligence", although he may be treating Lewis's point more literally than it was intended:

Mr Lewis affirms that it is in the service of *vision* that his ideas are mobilised, and that all he thinks or says can be traced to the Eye. No advantage can be gained by localising one's perceptions to that organ in particular, except to make one suspicious of those who function normally with all their senses. Mr Lewis's Eye has not been of much help to him in his incursions into poetry, mathematics, or music. (*CW IV*, 1988:236)

Lewis's assertion of the visual is an attempt to outline a concrete artistic practice – an "externalizing" one in Jameson's phrase – as opposed to one that explores the subjective and the internal. While at this point Lewis's "anti-Bergsonism" doesn't seem to mean much to Campbell, increasingly this language of a resistance to "flux" creeps into Campbell's vocabulary, and with it, a hardened language about a range of positions that can be loosely defined as "political".

By the time he came to write his "Rejected Review" of *The Apes of God* (in *Satire and Fiction*, 1930), Campbell had immersed himself in Lewisian terminology, although his exposition of these themes was more truncated, polemical, and less philosophically compelling than in Lewis's own writing. He sympathetically cites Lewis's explanation of *The Apes of God* as reflecting the collapse of English social life:

'Its theme,' he says, 'is the confusion of intellect and of emotion as exhibited in a society groping back to its childhood, and how beneath the threat of a future which it is too exhausted to grasp it calls loudly for its Mamma, and returns to the bibs and bottles of babyhood.' It was natural that the prophets of frightfulness should have been succeeded by the prophets of Domestic Comfort – Shaw, Wells, Bennett, Barrie, and Chesterton who (with all due deference to the fine work that has been done by the first three) have no intellectual or spiritual destination, but have founded their Utopias respectively on the more-or-less physical basis of premature baldness and inertia, universal pasteurisation, commercial well-being, childishness, and beery jollity. (*CW III*, 1988:260, 261)

This review was rejected by Ellis Roberts, the acting editor of *The New Statesman*, for being "too favourable" to Lewis. The Arthur Press published the review itself, its letter of rejection

by Roberts, Campbell's "Preface to a Rejected Review" (cited in *CW IV*:258) and a "History of a Rejected Review" along with a number of letters praising the novel, as part of his and Lewis's collaborative pamphlet, *Satire and Fiction* (1930). The rejection letter from Roberts accuses Campbell of taking Lewis "altogether more seriously than I think is justifiable... you ignore what seems to me his obvious lack of composition -- he can only write in sentences, or occasionally in paragraphs" (1930:10). He adds that "I cannot let even Roy Campbell speak of Chesterton as 'a prophet of domestic comfort' or dismiss other major writers as 'the author of "no fine work".'" He offers to publish the review "with such modifications as I think good" (1930:13).

DSJ Parsons (1971) plausibly suggests that for Lewis the skirmish with *The New Statesman* was an opportunity "to pull off a considerable advertising stunt and to include a sheaf of commendatory letters from literary notables and extracts from favourable reviews, as well as to formulate his well-known views on satire, later incorporated into *Men Without Art*. At the same time, whether consciously or not, Lewis was paving the way for Campbell himself as a major satirist in his own right" (1971:409). In a footnote, Parsons suggests that, while *The Georgiad* (1931) was not yet in print, it was likely that Lewis knew of Campbell's intention to publish it; similarly Campbell may have read parts of *The Apes of God* long before the appearance of the whole book. He argues that *The Georgiad* is the poem "which singly owes more directly to Lewis than any other and which, because of its many points of agreement with the master's outlook and favourite subject matter, inevitably bears comparison with the *Apes of God*. What indeed may be demonstrated is that Campbell's *Georgiad* is his *Apes of God*" (410). Parsons' essay convincingly demonstrates this by identifying a set of common themes in both texts, which include:

[T]he reversal of the roles of the sexes, the cults of youth and of the "child-artist", and the worship of primitivism. [...] In addition, now Lewis's stress on the injurious ramifications of literary-artistic gossip in High Bohemia, as well as his emphasis on psychoanalysis as co-conspirator with the anti-individual, time-obsessed, sex-and-child-centered Zeitgeist, was a fresh, if natural, extension of his opposition to the societification of art and literature. It is interesting, then, that in *The Georgiad*, too, though topics such as the sexual inversion of literature personalities are found [...], much of the poem's satire is directed at the workings of gossip and the mumbo jumbo of popular psychoanalysings.¹⁰⁰ (Parsons, 1971:415)

¹⁰⁰ Campbell describes the "main character types and subjects of *The Apes of God*" as follows:

The characters of Mr Lewis' novel are all children of this Shavian millennium seeking for happy irresponsibility – the dog-loving lady-artist, the champion practical joker, the would-be caveman of Bloomsbury, the psychoanalytical bore, the nancy-boy and the would-be child, who pathetically strives to retain his "youth" instead of trying to grow up.[...] the sentimental idealization of youth for its own

These themes are evident not only in Campbell's *The Georgiad*, but also in much of his prose commentary of the very late 1920s and early 1930s, in which Lewis's voice can certainly be heard. The rejected review begins by making an extensive comparison between Lewis's satire and that of Ben Jonson. He argues:

Lewis resembles the Jonson of the social comedies in that Jonson was the great comic pathologist of the Elizabethan 'gull' in his 'humours', 'melancholies' and 'roarings'. So Lewis is the pathologist of our Georgian revolutionary simpleton in his complexes, lispings and poutings. His method of caricature is the same as that of Jonson. He accentuates mercilessly the ruling 'humour' of each of his characters, until his whole comedy is projected so far beyond the scope of the ordinary naturalistic fiction as to arrive at the boundary of the very finest satirical poetry. Like Jonson, too, he can galvanise characters, who in real life have little enough reality (except as *types*), into vital and unforgettable dramatic creations. ("The Rejected Review", *CW IV*, 1988:260)

In comparing Lewis to Jonson, Campbell has arrived at an entirely sympathetic sense of both Lewis' obsessions and his expressive mode.¹⁰¹ He argues further:

Just as in the emotional age of Rousseau some kind providence sent a Voltaire to counteract the flux of 'feeling' and to avenge the human intellect, so in our age of Lawrence and Joyce (intuitive poets) a conscious intellectual spirit has arrived, in Lewis, to restore the equilibrium. (*CW IV*, 1988:261)

Moreover, Campbell is more sympathetic to Lewis's intensely visual prose style, which he describes as "a visual medium unequalled by any other contemporary" (1988:261). Their mutual interest in the capability of satire to restore intellectual "equilibrium" enables Campbell to absorb himself fully in Lewis's representation of his own role as the "Enemy".

Enemies

Lewis's little magazine, *The Enemy: A Review of Art and Literature*, appeared in three volumes between 1927 and 1929. Most of the material in it was written by Lewis, and much of it had been published (or would be) under other titles (a considerable proportion of *Time and Western Man* (1927) was reproduced in *The Enemy*). The third volume includes Campbell's poem, "The Albatross", later published in *Adamastor*, and there is some suggestion that Campbell helped to edit the magazine. Its title is accounted for by the following epigraph:

sake, of the feminine in the male, and the male in the feminine; the romanticism of the negrophilist. (in *CW IV*, 1988:261)

¹⁰¹ Part of Roberts's objection to the review has to do with Campbell's comparison between Jonson and Lewis; Roberts may have felt that this dignified Lewis's work in unmerited ways. He comments: "Much of your review seems to me both brilliant and true -- tho I think a closer analogue for Lewis than Jonson would be Nashe" (1930:11).

A man of understanding is to benefit by his enemies... He that knoweth that he hath an enemy will look circumspectly about him to all that matters, ordering his life and behaviour in better sort...

But for as much as amity and friendship nowadays speaketh with a small and low voice, and is very audible and full of words in flattery, what remaineth but that we should hear the truth from the mouth of our enemies? Thine enemy, as thou knowest well enough, watcheth continually, spying and prying into all thine actions. As for our friends, it chanceth many times that they fall extreme sick, yea, and die while we defer and put off from day to day to go and visit them, or make small reckoning of them; but as touching our enemies we are so observant, we curiously enquire even after their very dreams. (Plutarch *Moralia*, in *The Enemy*, 1927)

At the rear of the third volume, the following note appears in the characteristic capitalized bold text of Lewis's magazines:

THE "ENEMY" IS THE NOTORIOUS AUTHOR, PAINTER AND PUBLICIST MR WYNDHAM LEWIS. HE IS THE DIOGENES OF THE DAY: HE SITS LAUGHING IN THE MOUTH OF HIS TUB AND POURS FORTH HIS INVECTIVE UPON ALL PASSERSBY, IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE, CREED, RANK OR PROFESSION, AND SEX. THIS PAPER, WHICH APPEARS OCCASIONALLY, IS THE PRINCIPAL VEHICLE OF HIS CRITICISM. (*The Enemy*, 3, 1929)

Lewis's understanding of his own position as that of the Cynic Diogenes is repeated in his introduction to *Time and Western Man*, in which he cites Caird's definition of Cynic philosophy (against himself, he claims) as a means of explaining his own practice:

"The Cynic philosophy (Caird writes) was one of those beginnings of progress which take the appearance of reaction. When some aspect of thought or life has been for a long time unduly subordinated, or has not yet been admitted to its rightful place, it not seldom finds expression in a representative individuality, who embodies it in his person, and works it out in its most exclusive and one-sided form, with an almost fanatical disregard of all other considerations – compensating for the general neglect of it by treating it as the one thing needful. Such individuals produce their effect by the very disgust they create among the ordinary respectable members of the community.... Their criticism of the society to which they belong, and of all its institutions and modes of action and thought, attracts attention by the very violence and extravagance of the form in which they present it... In this fashion the Cynic seems to have acted upon the ancient ... world, as a disturbing, irritating challenge to it to vindicate itself – a challenge which was violently resented, but which awakened thought and in time produced a modification, and even a transformation of prevailing 'opinions.'" (Caird, *The Evolution of Theology*, cited in Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, 1927:4)

Lewis's interest in the idea of the "Enemy" then reflects his sense of himself as an agent provocateur, a man without a "position" except as a scourge and irritant to society. This would have resonated with Campbell's understanding of the purpose of his own little magazine, *Voorslag*, in the South African context.

Lewis, Campbell and fascist ideas

Apart from his cloak and dagger persona, and his provocations of the literary and fine arts establishment, Lewis gained notoriety for an early pamphlet on *Hitler* (1931), which he later recanted. This pamphlet was written (or hastily compiled, in Jameson's estimation) during the period in which Campbell and Lewis were working together most closely (largely for the purpose of promoting Lewis), and its ideas must have had a significant influence on Campbell, and his emerging "political" interests and consciousness in Spain in the early 1930s.

In an Appendix to his study of Lewis, entitled "Hitler as Victim", Fredric Jameson (1979) explores the grounds of Lewis's early support for Hitler. He observes that "*Hitler* is informed by *all* the ideological positions which will remain constant to the very end of Lewis' life: those fundamental themes do not change, even if his view of Hitler did. Among them ... is his attitude to *fascism* as a historical force. Here, but to the end of his career, fascism remains for Lewis the great political expression of *revolutionary* opposition to the status quo. This fundamentally historical vision of fascism – this structural place of "fascism" in Lewis' libidinal apparatus – is not altered by his later (and impeccable) anti-Nazi convictions, and is in fact recapitulated in *Monstre gai*, published only two years before Lewis' death in 1957" (1979:184).

The "ideological positions" that Jameson has in mind, and which he summarizes in a series of propositions, bear close relation to the themes of the literary criticism of both Campbell and Lewis at this period. One of these themes is that:

The Nazi conception of race is a welcome antidote to the Marxian conception of class: 'The Class-doctrine – as opposed to the Race-doctrine – demands a *clean slate*, Everything must be wiped off slick. A sort of colourless, featureless, automaton.... Nothing but a mind *without backgrounds*, without any spiritual depth, a flat mirror for propaganda, a parrot-soul to give back the catchwords, an ego *without reflection*, in a word a sort of Peter Pan Machine – the adult Child – will be tolerated' (84). (1979:181)

This comment shows the alleged Marxian ideal subject – one without background, context or tradition – to be the object of Lewis's critique. The critique of the "Youth cult", or the cult of "the adult Child" which Lewis and Campbell perceive in the Bloomsbury set, is echoed by Campbell in *The Georgiad* (1931), but his own humorous take on it is less concerned with the

relationship between history and identity, than it is with a particular kind of failed (manly) vitality:

But of all other cults that here are found
The cult of 'Youth' most firmly holds its ground -
'Young poets' as they call them in 'The Nation'
Or 'writers of the younger generation' –
Spry youths, some under ninety, I could swear,
For two had teeth and one a tuft of hair
And all a die-hard look for grim despair:
Real Peter Pans, who never age in mind,
But at the age of ninety wake to find
They've left ripe age and manhood far behind. (*CWI*, 1985:192)

In *Time and Western Man* (1927), Lewis devotes considerable energy to exposing such a "Youth cult" in a number of writers of his day. He makes fun of Gertrude Stein on account of her "childish stammer" which he argues is a "sham" of inarticulacy, and of Anita Loos, on the grounds of her physical height. Stein exemplifies the link between the "Youth cult" and "time consciousness"; a case he makes with reference to the "Time" obsession expressed in "faux-naïf" style in Stein's essay "Composition as Explanation".¹⁰² The consequences of this critique emerge in the *Hitler* essay, in which the "adult child" represents a modern figure disjoined from context, tradition, and "time" – shamming eternal youth, whilst eternally obsessed with time passing.

A further key ideological impulse in the *Hitler* essay which relates to themes which Campbell held in common with Lewis just before and around 1930 is the critique of the self-critique of European intellectual and cultural "civilization". Jameson says that for Lewis, "Hitler's program is exemplary as a defense of Europe, at a time when Europe's intellectuals are at work undermining its legitimacy through their 'exotic sense'" (1979:181) – i.e. through their interest in other cultures, and particularly in "primitivism". Other themes included in the pamphlet are Lewis's (and Campbell's) characteristic challenge to a "'Sex-War', an 'Age-war', a 'Colour-line-war'", which Lewis (though this is less clear for Campbell) associates

¹⁰² He cites Stein's line "In the beginning there was time in the composition that naturally was in the composition but time in the composition comes now and this is what is now troubling every one the time in the composition is now a part of distribution and equilibration", and then comments:

In Miss Stein's composition there is above all *time*, she tells us as best she can. As best she can, as you see; for she is not able to tell us this or anything else clearly and simply; first of all because a time-obsession, it seems, interferes, so we are given to understand. The other reason is that she is not simple at all, although she writes usually so like a child – like a confused stammering, rather 'soft' (bloated, acromegalic, squinting and spectacled, one can figure it as) child. (1927:65)

with the divisive forces of capitalism (1979:181). Jameson further points out that for Lewis, “‘Race’ essentially stands for the affirmation of the specificity of the national situation”, and that “Hitlerian economics are those of the German peasant, essentially an anticapitalist attack on banks, loan-capital, and the War Debt” (1979:181). The most interesting of these themes from a literary point of view is the one of “personality”. It is with reference to this term that Lewis distinguishes Communist from Fascist challenges to the capitalist system, arguing that Communism is a “‘fanatically dehumanizing doctrine’ ... Its injunctions are very rigidly erected against the continuance of ‘the person’”. On the other hand, argues Lewis, Hitlerism might “‘retain *too much* personality, of a second-rate order, nevertheless Hitlerism seems preferable to Communism, which would have *none at all*, if it had its way. Personality is the only thing that matters in the world [...] On principle – for his is a deliberately ‘catastrophic’ philosophy (the word is Marx’s) – the Communist views everything in the darkest colours ... The Hitlerist dream is full of an imminent classical serenity – leisure and abundance. It is, with them, *Misery-spot* against *Golden Age!*” (*Hitler*, 1931:182-184 cited in Jameson, 1979:182, 183)

Jameson’s comments about the value of “oppositional thinking” for Lewis are enlightening for an understanding of Campbell – especially at this point of his career in which his own instinct to speak against the status quo is profoundly influenced by Lewis’s terms. Jameson suggests that “fascism continued to stand as the political (and libidinal) embodiment of Lewis’ chronic negativity, his oppositionalism, his stance as the Enemy, long after the defeat of institutional fascism itself” (1979:184). This Jameson associates with the “anticapitalist posture of profascism”. Communism itself could not represent this anticapitalism for Lewis, because of his “feeling... that Communism was a historical inevitability, and thus, in a sense, the final and most irrevocable form of the *Zeitgeist*, that against which the oppositional mind must somehow always take a stand” (1979:184). Campbell’s absorption of Lewis’s positions about Hitler is manifest in his long-unpublished monograph, *Wyndham Lewis*, completed in 1932:

Paleface should be read along with *Hitler* where, in contrasting the *Blutsgefühl* of the German national socialists with the exotic camp, of which the former is in some ways a radical corrective, Lewis shows us that the racial solution indicated in Hitlerism is not entirely to be despised (if not necessarily to be swallowed whole) whereas the exotic sense is an entirely despicable and crass form of sentimentality. (*CW III*, 1988:29)

It is perhaps worth recalling that Campbell himself invoked the “exotic sense” in his early years in London, and referred specifically to Zulu culture in his criticism of white South African culture. This hardened position then represents a significant shift in his thinking.

Later, his anti-semitic comments in *Broken Record* (1934) reflect very much the same position:

The biggest anti-white alarmist bureau in London is run by a well-meaning Jew and a crowd of Quakers. Passionately negrophile and misanthropic at the same time, it publishes anything that would dirty the reputation of the white man, whether it comes from the side of the fanatical over-domesticated bourgeois or from the far more powerful Jewish submarine torpedoes. I am no pogromite myself. One can forgive the Jews anything for the beauty of their women, which makes up for the ugliness of their men. But I fail to see how a man like Hitler makes any ‘mistake’ in expelling a race that is intellectually subversive as far as we are concerned: that has none of our visual sense, but a wonderful dim-sighted instinct for dissolving, softening, undermining, and vulgarising. (*CW III*, 1988:136)

For both men, these opinions would become a source of some embarrassment, and contributed to their increasingly unpopular standing in the literary and artistic London milieu of the 1930s.

Lewis’s defence of personality

By contrast to Eliot, for Lewis it is “personality” (which for him means being what we already are) that is the antidote to modern “time-consciousness” and its attendant cults. This relates to the role of the necessarily irritating figure of the Cynic in a society that has lost its way. Schenker (1992) describes the earlier Lewis as a “radical antihumanist”, who detected modern hubris in the theory of “impersonality”, which he saw as a sham humility which masks the artist’s self-aggrandizement within the cosmic order.¹⁰³ In his essay on “T.S. Eliot” in *Men Without Art* (1934), Lewis confronts the doctrine of “impersonality”, and exposes its

¹⁰³ Schenker cites the theologian Mark Taylor, who argues that:

... since the Renaissance each displacement of man from his once pivotal place in the cosmic order has left him in an increasingly dominant position vis-à-vis his natural, cultural, and spiritual environments: “[The] inversion of heaven and earth effectively shifts value from the divine to the human subject. Far from suffering the disorientation brought by the loss of center, modern humanism is self-confidently anthropocentric. While denying God, the humanist clings to the sovereignty of the self.” In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus explains that the “personality of the artist ... refines itself out of existence,” not to diminish the artist but, on the contrary, to bring him to a condition “like the God of creation”... Lewis almost certainly had Joyce in mind when one of the characters in his satire *The Apes of God* (1930), attacking what today we would call the survival of the subject... complain(s) that this appearance of impersonality “is a wonderful patent behind which the individual can indulge in a riot of personal egotism, impossible to earlier writers, not provided with such a disguise”. (1992:12)

limits in terms of both the “historical consciousness” and the question of artistic “sincerity”. Having established the key tenets of Eliot and I.A. Richards as being, respectively, the maximum of “depersonalization” and “disbelief”, he argues:

It *might* be a good thing – I do not say that it is – for an artist to have a ‘personality’: though here of course I am not using a ‘personality’ in the *Ballyhoo* sense – I do not mean an individualist abortion, bellowing that it wants at all costs to ‘express’ itself, and feverishly answering the advertisement of the quack who promises to develop such things overnight. I mean only a constancy and consistency in being, as concretely as possible, *one thing* – at peace with itself, if not with the outer world, though that is likely to follow after an interval of struggle...” (1934:75)

In his analysis of Eliot, as of Joyce, Lewis attacks what he sees as the deceit, the hidden “Romanticism” and the hidden hubris of “humanism”, at work in the theory of impersonality. Later in the same essay he explicitly states his doubts about “impersonality”, in ways which seem to me to shed light on the common ground he holds with Campbell:

I do not believe in the anonymous, “impersonal”, catalytic, for the very good reason that I am sure the personality is in that as much as in the other part of this double-headed oddity [“depersonalization” and “disbelief”], however thoroughly disguised, and is more apt to be a corrupting influence in that arrangement than in the more usual one, where the artist is identified with his beliefs. If there is to be an “insincerity”, I prefer it should occur in the opposite sense – namely that the man, the personality, should exaggerate, a little artificially perhaps, his beliefs – rather than leaving a meaningless shell behind him, and go to hide in a volatilized hypostatization of his personal feeling. (1934:91)

This exaggerated expressionism is an element of both Lewis’s and Campbell’s artistic practice; particularly of course in their satire. For Lewis, not only is “impersonality” a self-deceiving doctrine. He argues further that the relationship between the “impersonal” writer, and the “historical sense” of the past which provides him with the material he needs to engage with the present, masks an exotic, i.e. a Romantic, understanding of history.¹⁰⁴ This is a position with which Campbell can easily identify. In his essay on *Wyndham Lewis*, Campbell comments:

But that which causes a person to stampede *away* from his own image, his own face, his own lineaments, and his own nature passes the bounds of the humanly pathetic – it

¹⁰⁴ “For it is easy to say ‘the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.’ But that past is, at the best, seeing its proportions, very selective, and its ‘presence’ is at the best ideal. You cannot purge it of the glamour of strange lands. Strange times, after all, *are* strange lands, neither more nor less. And so this theory of ‘the presence of the past’ results in a new exoticism (proper to our critical and chronological civilization) – an exoticism of exactly the same order as Baudelaire’s exoticism ... And so the *here and now* is diminished too much: and we desert the things that after all we stand a chance of learning something concrete about, for things we can never know except through a glass darkly and as it were in a romantic dream” (Lewis, 1934:74).

passes into the giant vacuous Chaos in which humour is the only creative principle that can live at all ... For in renouncing oneself personally, and in attempting to identify oneself with something contradictory to oneself, one ceases to be human at all: one becomes a clown and a puppet. (*CW III*, 1988:32)

This insistence on personality, along with the argument for satire as a method of engaging with the present, seem to be where Lewis and Campbell approach each other's views on art most nearly. For both, the aim of art is to engage with the world (and the self) as it is, in the here and now, and to do so requires an "external view". Both self-enquiry, and the annihilation of a human speaking self (as in the doctrine of "impersonality"), mask egotism. For both writers, a dramatic and expressive self, however contradictory and unstable, is an important and necessary construct with which to access the "here and now", through opposition and confrontation, the methods of the Enemy. An oppositional discourse, one which sounds profoundly misanthropic at times, is considered by them, paradoxically, as the antidote to the "narcissism" of humanism for Lewis and to the "misanthropy" of self-critique for Campbell.¹⁰⁵

What Lewis meant for Campbell

I suggest that Campbell's interest in the outsider figure of the poet (discussed in chapter 3), which is largely drawn from his reading of Baudelaire and Nietzsche, seems to him to accord with Lewis's Cynic philosophy of "The Enemy". These positions are not, perhaps, as close as Campbell imagined in 1930 and 1931, when he wrote his major defences of Lewis, but they do give him a cause for which to fight – Lewis's. This was an important source of creative energy for him, and possibly a significant influence on the political positions he espoused, which, like Lewis's, were rooted in his conception of artistic practice.

As I have suggested, by the time he wrote his essay on *Wyndham Lewis* during 1931 Campbell had absorbed Lewis's terms. In this essay, he reproduces them without critique,

¹⁰⁵ Schenker argues that "Lewis created a highly polemical art that forces the reader to be either for him or against him: he opposed his vision of an agonistic relationship between man and the world to what he saw as attempts in every area of modern cultural life to obliterate this necessary opposition, which he once described as 'the ancient and valuable iranian principle of duality' (ABR 25). He saw himself as a kind of spiritual aristocrat..." (1992:2). According to Schenker, Lewis's early "antihumanism" rests on T.E. Hulme's association of modern "rights" culture with "canons of satisfaction" (1992:13). Where Hulme was killed in the First World War, and never lived to work out the limits of his position, Lewis did, and finally withdrew from this position of "radical antihumanism". Schenker argues further that "Lewis also saw a problem that Hulme never seems to have recognized: that any attempt by a man to step outside the circle of his needs and offer a wholly disinterested account of the world must itself be looked upon as an act of hubris" (Schenker 1992:13).

arguing that Lewis “opposes to the Bergsonian idea of the intuitive, fluid, living nature of matter, and to the Berkeleyan idea that it consists mostly of mere facades, the idea that matter is mostly solid and dead – it amounts to the opposition of the living human individual, and whatever ideas can be abstracted from him, against the clock and the microscope” (*CW III*, 1988:37). Campbell’s view of *Time and Western Man*, in particular, is far more sympathetic in this monograph than it was in his review of 1927, as is his account of Lewis’s fiction. He argues that:

Lewis isolates his characters into vivid, separate identities and *forms*. While modern literature gropes inwards towards the unconscious, Lewis’s thought radiates outwards into the visible and the conscious. While Lawrence at his best succeeds in setting up in his readers a mild sympathetic erethism ... Lewis on the other hand gives one a shock of terrific voltage which immediately translates itself into an orgasm of laughter or into a sudden dazzling realisation of an idea. In Lewis’s work we leave the fluid world of semi-organic dreams and enter a world of vivid ideas, hard contours, and momentous impacts. If Lewis had lived in a heroic age he might very likely have been an epic poet ... (*CW III*, 1988:22).

The theme of the “heroic” and “epic” nature of Lewis’s work recurs throughout the monograph, with Campbell claiming at one point that “Lewis’s mind is not lyrical but heroic” (1988:41). He describes the figures of Lewis’s fiction in this same vein:

Lewis’s characters are Titans of extravagant mirth, like the grinning giants of the carnival, but they are so terribly vital and charged with such energy that they carry us outside the ordinary limits of comedy and tragedy, into the world of epic realities... (*CW III*, 1988:22)

In his review of *Wyndham Lewis*, however, Antony Woodward makes the convincing argument that while Campbell absorbed Lewis’s statement of his themes, his account of the figures in Lewis’ darkly satirical tableaux as epic and heroic seems to be a misreading. With reference to the excerpt quoted above, Woodward argues:

A recurrent device in his (Lewis’s) satirical novels is to freeze a character in some minutely anatomised physical posture that undermines the surrounding mental uplift. The relentless anfractuosity of these physical descriptions ends by clogging the movement of the novels: unwieldy monsters petrified in their own bile. Campbell’s description of Lewis’ style – ‘so densely packed with thought, meaning and vision, and at the same time moving with such velocity’ – sounds wrong in its last clause. The detail of the novels may heave with ghoulish animation, but the mass is inert. Equally debatable is Campbell’s description of Lewis’ powers of characterisation, [...] in most of Lewis’s later fiction the characters are not the free creations of an Olympian relish [...] but the convulsive victims of shock-therapy, twitching and jerking under the unremitting supervision of the novelist’s robust jibes. (1985:205, 206)

Lewis's own statements on satire accord more closely to Woodward's comment than to Campbell's; for instance where he defends Swift's characters from Hazlitt's critique of them as "machines governed by mere routine", buried in "a leaden cistern" (1934:113). For Lewis, this is exactly how these characters should be, but they are not heroic representations; Campbell has understood Lewis's project through the lens of his own poetry. In his own quest for a disruptive and an animating artistic energy, Campbell would explore a variety of heroic speakers of both classical and modernist heritage as is discussed in chapters 3-5.

Like Campbell, Lewis did indeed seek a violating and expressionist verbal mode, in which conflict and opposition could be tracked and witnessed; but there the similarity ends. Their paths part ways most evidently in their responses to the human body, which, as Daniel Albright points out, is "cubist" for Lewis, and his human figures are, in Yeats' description, "homunculi in bottles":¹⁰⁶

Lewis regarded the human body as an assemblage of hard forms; and similarly his characters often think in aphorisms, cutting remarks, hard planes of ideas, as if mind and body alike were constructed by a kind of *découpage*. Lewis saw himself as a Modernist opposed to some of the major tendencies in Modernism, mostly concerning wave models of reality – the Stream of Consciousness, the re-creation of indeterminate flux... on experience viewed as an endless sloshing-about (1997:91)

In Campbell's early poetry, on the other hand, as will be discussed in chapter 3, the suffering and mortal "body" of his poetic speakers drives the aspiration to heroic and redemptive, if rhetorical, gestures and assertions of both abjection and grandiosity. In Campbell's later poetry, as well as in the philosophy of *Taurine Provence* (1932) discussed in chapter 5, he seeks a model of creative expression that applies simultaneously to language and physical

¹⁰⁶ This description is taken from Yeats' letter, published in *Satire and Fiction*, in which Yeats praises Lewis for his "portrayal (in the *Apes of God*) of 'the transition from individualism to universal plasticity, though your theme is not, like his [Pirandello's], plasticity itself but the attempted substitution for it of ghastly homunculi in bottles' (*Satire and Fiction*, 1930:29). ... Lewis struggled to guess what Yeats was talking about – as he wrote to Augustus John:

What Yeats meant by "universal plasticity" was of course the opposite to what is usually described as "individualism": his phrase is very descriptive of the thing in question – a mystical mess. In general *melting* preparatory to absolute holy fusion (like a world of tallow candles upon a hot afternoon) the members of the world-about-to-melt *would* assume the appearance somewhat of "homunculi", – what was meant by "in bottles" I do not know. (If you are in a bottle you cannot *fuse*!). His letter was splendid. (cited in Albright, 1997:83)

Albright tracks this image of the "ghastly homunculi in bottles" back to the "passé futurism" of H.G. Wells' novel *The First Men in the Moon*, which describes an "overspecialized society of intelligent insects dwelling on the moon" (1997:84). These creatures are carefully developed in bottles in order to atrophy certain aspects of their physiology and exaggerate others which may prove useful. Albright argues that this image reflects an interest in burgeoning "in vitro" technology (also described in Huxley's *Brave New World* of 1930), but also traces it back to the homunculus in a bottle in Goethe's *Faust* (1832) which "offers a kind of fore-parody of some of Yeats's own desires – to immure himself in a mosaic, to become a golden bird ("Sailing to Byzantium")..." (1997:87).

action; his romance about Provençal life has to do with his sense that its physical and literary cultures are mutually reinforcing. His theory of the body, and his suffering if heroic poetic figures, are indeed nothing like Lewis's "homunculi". His notion of an intrinsic relationship between "Life" and "Art" is also profoundly different from Lewis's idea that "Life" is "unreal", and that the only "reality" lies in the world the artist creates.

Lewis's iconoclastic practice sharply exposes the path that his modernist contemporaries tried to navigate between a critique of nineteenth century progress discourses, the impossibility of turning to older forms of understanding, and a consciousness of the limits of "the new", which is manifest for him in such diverse contemporary manifestations as the "cult of impersonality" and Diaghilev's Russian ballet.¹⁰⁷



Mr Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro (1920 – 1)

Ferens Art Gallery, Hull City Museums and Art Gallery

© The Estate of Mrs G.A. Wyndham Lewis: The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust

¹⁰⁷ Here I am thinking of David Peters Corbett's suggestion that the Russian ballet, post 1918, had come to stand for a commitment to "modernity in art and life" and a smug celebration of "one's own perceptiveness and discrimination. It was also to ally oneself with the new dispensation that was emerging after the war, to claim to be of the 1920s rather than of the 1910s" (1996:109). He shows how Lewis saw art in this High Bohemian aspect as a means of "self-advertisement and self-celebration" (1996:109). In this context, Lewis develops his concept of the "Enemy" as the antidote to what he saw as a bloated, moneyed and forgetful cultural scene.

Reading Lewis's novels today, argues Fredric Jameson, reminds the reader of the initial impact of modernism, now attenuated through institutionalisation. "The neglect of Lewis is thus a happy accident for us, who can then, as from out of a time capsule, once more sense that freshness and virulence of modernizing stylization less and less accessible in the faded texts of his contemporaries"(1979:3). Jameson's point is that the surprising force of Lewis' linguistic "externalizing and mechanical [...] expressionism" (1979:2) stems from its contrast to the impressionistic aesthetic that has dominated Anglo-American modernism. Linguistic satirical aggression is the antidote to this aesthetic for Lewis, as well as for Campbell, both of whom perceived what Jameson presents as loss of impact over time, as a feature of their contemporary literary landscapes.

Some legacies

2007 was the 50th anniversary of the deaths of both Roy Campbell and Wyndham Lewis. The anniversary of Lewis's death was marked by an exhibition of his portraits at the National Portrait Gallery in London in 2008, and a series of planned re-publications of his novels and autobiography by independent publishers. Some of these works have been out of print since the 1960s. In a review in *The Guardian*, Alison Flood terms this a "literary rehabilitation more than 50 years after his death" (2008). The portraits on display in this exhibition were mostly of well-known literary and artistic figures in London in the 1920s and the 30s: James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Edith Sitwell, Rebecca West, Augustus John and others. One of these paintings, on loan from the Durban Municipal Art Gallery, was the portrait of T.S. Eliot, which had been rejected by the Royal Academy in 1938, apparently over the presence of phallic fertility symbols in the background. This rejection precipitated the resignation of Augustus John and others from the Academy in protest. The Durban Art Gallery acquired the painting on 8 December 1939 but the story of how it finally became the property of a South African Art Gallery appears to have been lost. All the Gallery's acquisition note offers is the following information:

The painting was given to the Durban Art Gallery anonymously, but it is understood to have been procured by a Dr. May, in 1939, chairman of the Art Gallery Advisory Committee, through Dr T.J Honeyman,¹⁰⁸ now chairman of Glasgow's Vasco Art Gallery. It is said to have been bought from the artist himself and though the purchase

¹⁰⁸ According to W.K. Rose, (1963), Lewis "became acquainted with T.J. Honeyman (b.1891) when he was a director of the Lefevre Gallery. In 1939 Honeyman left this position to become Director of the Glasgow Art Galleries" (Rose, 1963:265 n1). In a further footnote, Rose observes that Lewis had painted a portrait of Mrs Honeyman some years before.

price is unknown, it is thought that this was in the region of 200 pounds. (Acquisition note, Durban Municipal Art Gallery)

While I do not know whether Campbell had anything to do with the painting's ultimate settlement in South Africa, it seems remarkable that this work should find itself in the gallery of the town of his birth. Its presence there is a reminder of his intense involvement with both Eliot and Lewis in the 1920s.

Conclusion

Roy Campbell's and William Plomer's poetic instinct to invert the colonial gaze points to a discursive impasse in the thought of the time. Campbell's form of argument in *Voorslag* is less exposition than a playful reversal of the colonial habits of thinking which earnestly parrot a wooden version of mainstream pseudo-scientific debate. He consciously exploits paradox and perspectival reversals for rhetorical effect; in this process, "ideas" and "thinking" emerge as a lively struggle over terms and their meanings. Campbell's confrontational essays in *Voorslag*, silly as they are at times, are also an entertaining and refreshing rebuttal of the often politically expedient social theorizing that threatens to dominate the prose pages of the magazine. The meanings of the mutually referential terms in these discussions (such as the terms civilized/ primitive) are contested. In toying with their field of reference, the poets, Campbell and Plomer, can do no more than unseat their apparent stability.

At the same time, and with equal energy, Campbell protests against the European appeal to the "primitive" both as a means of escape from an overburdened sense of the march of civilization and as a means of enquiring into the nature of the "self". I suggest that Campbell's affinity for this position was greatly strengthened by his close connection with Wyndham Lewis on his return to England from South Africa, and which endured until the mid-1930s. At this point, both writers shared the position that the artistic "self" is not to be either interrogated or denied, but serves as a place (however fictional) from which to address the world. In his essays published in the 1920s in South Africa and in England, Campbell participates in the modernist effort to separate itself from aspects of the Romantic legacy. The accusation is that in the Romantic view, poetic language is seen to have hieratic and redemptive power to bring an idealised world, seamlessly married to the spirit of the literary personality which authors it, into being. To this he adds the specific insights to do with the distinct and relative ways in which neo-Romantic perspectives work themselves out both in

Anglo-European nature poetry, and in the embattled South African context. That his anti-Romantic arguments are fraught with paradoxes reflects the broader quest facing his modernist contemporaries for a theory of art liberated from the legacy of Romantic philosophy, yet profoundly reliant on its key terms.

In this chapter I suggest that while the contradictions in his thought partly reflect a “normal” process of the evolution of a writer’s ideas, they also show Campbell’s participation in the modernist struggle to articulate the problematic idea of “newness” – to find a language with which to describe the radically different art required by the rapid social changes of the early twentieth century (both in South Africa and in England). His colonial roots and the lack of a rich South African debate on the one hand give him instant access to “newness” associated metaphorically with the redemptive power of the South over the North (as seen, for example, in his comments about Afrikaans as a fresh and renewing language). On the other hand, he is chary of a similar argument which claims that it is in colonial masculinity that Empire renews itself. In the context of both metropolitan modernism and South African debates about “art” and “society” of the mid-late 1920s, debates about aesthetic principles relate covertly to social and political debates. Campbell is a late-comer to the anti-Bergsonian philosophies of Eliot and Lewis, with their roots in Hulme’s deeply conservative notions of an orderly and defined society. While Lewis, Eliot and Campbell all attempt to resist Romanticism and “Bergsonism” in distinctive ways, Campbell shares with Lewis an oppositional and satirical philosophy of art, which retains a sense of the use-value of the expressive self, whatever guise it may take. That this self may contradict itself over time and between contexts is, to him, not especially important.



T.S. Eliot (1938)

Durban Municipal Art Gallery

© The Estate of Mrs G.A. Wyndham Lewis: The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust,

Chapter Three: *The Flaming Terrapin* as modernist “epic”

It is something, after all, to have the courage to be damnably poetical. It is something to be unafraid of the ample gesture, the upswing arm, and the frenzied eye, of the cloaked figure standing prophetically out against the horizon and wind-driven clouds, of lone defiance flung shatteringly up to Heaven and downwards to the ruck of the groundlings. It is still something to be shameless in one’s rank superbity of spirit, to have no urbane shrinking from the preposterous eloquence of trumpets or thunder or hurricanes.... (Hamish Miles, *Dial* (November 1924), cited in Alexander, 1982:36)

Bellerophon, the primal cowboy, first
Heard that wild summons on the stillness burst.
As, from the dusty mesa leaping free,
He slewed his white-winged broncho out to sea,
[...]
And splashed with stars and dashed with stinging spray,
The dandy of the prairies rode away! (Roy Campbell, *The Flaming Terrapin*, *CWI*, 1985:36)

The Flaming Terrapin (1924), Campbell’s first major published work, devises an iconoclastic regeneration myth drawn from a wide range of mythologies and images – biblical, classical, Symbolist, Darwinian and Nietzschean, among others. Hamish Miles’ contemporaneous review of the poem implies that its “poetical” nature derives from the “rank superbity” of the poet’s spirit. The masculinist myth, in which, according to Campbell, the Terrapin is “the symbol for masculine energy” (Parsons, 1993:78), supports a reading of the poem as an expression of Campbell’s youthful experiences of a colonial frontier. While the epic first person speaker recounts the actions of multiple and shape-shifting heroes in this poem, he is also implicated in the story he tells. I suggest that both the initial appreciative reception of the poem, and later critical embarrassment about it, relate to the way in which its themes and gestures appear to mirror those of the poet’s own personality, and the changing ways in which both this version of masculinity and its rhetorical style are received. This “masculinist” epic introduces in heroic and grandiose terms the important theme of the poetic self which is explored along more reflective lines in Campbell’s lyrical poetry of the late 1920s and early 1930s, as will be discussed in chapter 4.

According to Campbell himself, the main theme of *The Flaming Terrapin* is the regeneration of an ageing and disillusioned Northern world by figures associated with a vital, regenerative South. Campbell’s own comments on the poem serve to establish its “evolutionary framework” (Parsons, 1993:78). In his sole explicit account of its meaning, set out in a letter to his parents, he states:

...in a world suffering from shell-shock, with most of its finest breeding-stock lost, and the rest rather demoralised, it is interesting to conjecture whether a certain portion of the race may not have become sufficiently ennobled by its sufferings to reinstate and

even improve on the prewar standard, and in the end to supplant the descendants of those who have become demoralized and stagnant, like the Russians for instance. I have taken this more cheerful view, as I would much sooner feel that I was a Simian in a state of evolution into something higher, than a fallen angel in a state of decline. So, with the deluge as symbolizing the war and its subsequent hopelessness, I have represented in the Noah family, the survival of the fittest, and tried to describe the manner in which they won through the terrors of the storm and eventually colonised the earth. (cited in Pearce, 2001:50-51)

This jaunty comment seems to reflect Campbell's lack of personal experience of the war. At the same time, he had quickly become aware of the post-war atmosphere in England, and its literature. Haresnape points out that in 1920 Campbell had published a few poems in *Coterie* (1919-1921), the magazine edited by T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, TW Earp among others, and which published "poetry concerned with the implications, direct and oblique, of the War" (Haresnape, 1982:19).¹⁰⁹

But the war seems to be a pretext for the personal myth devised here. The poem can be regarded as Campbell's first sustained account of his notion of an "equestrian nation" – a global community of a physical and intellectual elite.¹¹⁰ This notion apparently looks backwards to feudal forms of social organization and anachronistic models of masculinity. I hope to show, however, that the masculinity imagined in the poem is more consciously experimental than seems apparent at first reading. I suggest that the notion of the "equestrian nation", though certainly anti-historical, is not necessarily anti-modernist. This imagined community is founded on a hybrid notion of the heroic, in which the characteristics of the metropolitan dandy, who consciously performs a particular version of masculinity, merge with the apparently unstudied or "natural" sense of self associated with the provincial outsider. The overall effect is that of a "community" of individuals, held together by camaraderie of a certain kind. The poem then becomes a space in which Campbell can imaginatively rework the full range of social as well as literary and philosophical influences which contribute to his modernist masculinist mythology.

¹⁰⁹ His admiration for the war poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen is expressed in the essay "Modern Poetry and Contemporary History" published in series in *The Natal Witness*, in March and April, 1925. He says of Owen and Sassoon that, "they remembered that a poet must have no nationality where the larger interests of humanity are concerned. That it is the poet's first duty to get rid of any hereditary sentimentality, to work and suffer with the rest of humanity, but to keep his consciousness focussed on humanity". Of Owen he comments, "To most of our minds the vision of war was too tremendous to be grasped; we bent before it like reeds. He (Owen) stood up against it like the oak in Aesop's fable..." (CW IV, 1988:176). In this essay, Campbell seems to have absorbed more fully the psychic impact of the war than in his earlier and more glib comments.

¹¹⁰ A critical account of this ideal masculine community is set out in Tony Voss's essay, "Roy Campbell's *Mazeppa*" (2001). This article will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

The poem opens with a vision of the “intense creative Earth”, represented variously as Venus (“Anadyomene”) or as a “barbaric”, primeval mother, which spawns a race of men who transform and embellish their physical world. The “mirth” of her “strong sons”:

Vibrates upon the shining rocks and spills
In floods of rolling music on the hills. (CWI, 1985:33)¹¹¹

This opening establishes the eclectic fusion of images that sustains the poem; in this example, classical, biblical and Darwinist creation myths are all invoked. It further introduces the principle of energy underlying elemental as well as mortal existence, a theme proposed and enacted by the motions of the poem. The imagery shows the world to be a radiant play of colour and light, in which the monuments of earth, water and sky interact with one another as active agents:

Faint snow-peaks catch the sun’s far-swivelled beams:
And, tinder to his rays, the mountain-streams
Kindle

Living creatures, too, are aroused and awakened by the dawn movements of “Maternal Earth”:

Far out to sea the gales with savage sweep
Churning the water, waken drowsy fins
Huge fishes to propel from monstrous sleep

The play between forms of life and elemental nature repeats itself, until it is finally shown to stem from the principle of energy which drives each element of the universe. Even the inert stones are replete with the potential to express themselves in both colour and song:

And every stone that lines my lonely way,
Sad tongueless nightingale without a wing,
Seems on the point of rising up to sing
And donning scarlet for its dusty grey! (33)

From this neo-Romantic vision of elemental vitality, the speaker briefly comments on his own state of mind, indicating his “modernist” experience of solipsism and disillusionment. However, this remains a brief gesture, described in three or four lines in which he laments the loss of the “fervent mood” of the opening vision. For this loss, he is swiftly rebuked by the impatient sea, which sets the redemptive voyage of the poem in motion:

¹¹¹ The version of *The Flaming Terrapin* referred to throughout this chapter will be from the *Collected Works I*, 1985. Page numbers are indicated in brackets.

'Life is a dusty corridor,' I say,
'Shut at both ends.' But far across the plain,
Old Ocean growls and tosses his grey mane, (34)

The voice of the ocean brings "new sap" to his veins, reminding the speaker of the true nature of his self, and of the world of action which will subsequently be represented by the "Flaming Terrapin that towed the Ark". This world of elemental vitality and human heroic action is established, then, in a few brief lines, as an antidote to the modern malaise of self-consciousness and existential doubt.

From this point on, the remainder of the poem concerns itself with the myth of the Flood, and the epic voyage in which the Terrapin drags Noah's Ark through the turbulent seas, finally landing it on mount Ararat. Thereafter, his work done, the Terrapin returns to the primal waters from which he is born, in terms that are simultaneously biblical and evolutionary:

Back to the deep he sinks and in a proud
Disintegration, like a raining cloud,
Reversing the grand process of his birth,
Returned his borrowed vigour to the Earth. (60)

As the Terrapin, the symbol and embodiment of material energy, subsides into the ocean, and the Ark has finally come to rest on Ararat, Noah, stranded alone, bravely contemplates from his mountain top the void of the sky above him, and the "renewed" world below. This world appears to be a South African mountain kingdom, populated with "aasvogels" and "baboons", and from his position above it, Noah contemplates the sunset:

There as amid the growing shades he stood
Facing alone the sky's vast solitude,
That space, which gods and demons fear to scan,
Smiled on the proud irreverence of Man. (62)

It is the poem's project to celebrate "Man's" mortal defiance in the face of the "vast solitude" of unknown space. That the scene is set in a South African landscape exemplifies the residue of colonial frontier mythology at work; but the scene is finally mythical, transforming the details of history into a Nietzschean narrative of transcendent human will, and marrying elements of colonial experience to early modernist metaphysics. It is this marriage that gives the poem its original, if eccentric, visionary force.

Criticism of *The Flaming Terrapin* tends to emphasize either the “modernist” elements of the poem (such as its expression of Symbolist, Vorticist, social Darwinist and Nietzschean ideas), or its colonial themes. The South African aspects of the poem have been explored mainly by later twentieth century critics, such as Rowland Smith (1972), Geoffrey Haresnape (1982), and more recently by Tony Voss (2006) and Nicholas Meihuizen (2003, 2007). The “modernist” elements have, to an extent, been treated as distinct and separate from its relationship to colonial themes, and in particular, the South African landscape. The bizarrely diverse range of referential frames leads to critical accounts which fragment into highly specialized readings which struggle to find a coherent “meaning” to the poem.

Poetic Influences

The influence on *The Flaming Terrapin* most frequently remarked in early criticism is that of French Symbolism, and in particular, Arthur Rimbaud’s *Le Bateaux Ivre*. Both poems recount the adventures of a boat which is propelled by elemental forces, without the conscious direction of a helmsman, across the reaches of the globe. Rowland Smith notes that an early reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* pointed out the similarities between the two poems, commenting of *The Flaming Terrapin* that “the poem showed ‘probably the first instance of the direct influence of Rimbaud on English verse’”.¹¹² This establishes Campbell as an early importer of Rimbaud’s Symbolism into English literary modernism. Smith observes that “there are many similarities, particularly in the broad outline of the respective voyages through an exotic world” (1972:29).¹¹³ Moreover, both poems are striking in the global reach of the maritime adventures described, a feature which locates them within the

¹¹² *TLS*, May 29, 1924:337, in Smith (1972:28).

¹¹³ However, there are also significant differences of theme and event between the two poems, which Smith describes as follows:

The difference is marked between his [Campbell’s] overt moral purpose in describing the rehabilitation of man through the symbolic Terrapin’s journey, and Rimbaud’s subjective, fantastic account of the drifting of his drunken boat, which at times is described as only a projection of himself. [...] The personal note in the longing for the settled pleasures of Europe and its ancient parapets, in spite of all the visionary splendours experienced ‘dans le Poeme/De la Mer,’ is quite different from Campbell’s external view of the journey of his ark. Nevertheless, in spite of the differences between Campbell’s comparatively objective poem and Rimbaud’s subjective identification with the visionary voyage of his drunken and passive boat, the moments are similar in each poem when exotic, cosmic experiences are being evoked. [...] His [Campbell’s] strength does not lie in the surrealist, fantasy-world which Rimbaud creates with such compelling suggestion, but in the concreteness and vitality of his imagery. (1972:28-29)

early modernist tradition which includes the seafaring narratives of Joseph Conrad and Hermann Melville, and in particular *Moby Dick*.¹¹⁴

Apart from the strong resonances of Rimbaud a wide range of Anglo-American modernist literary influences can be discerned in the poem. Both Pearce (2001:51) and Haresnape (1982:25) point to Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot as important influences on the poem, and critics note the use of a vocabulary associated with Wyndham Lewis and his “Vorticist” movement (Pajalich, 1988), as well as Campbell’s interest in the late-nineteenth century Scottish poet, John Davidson (Parsons, 1993) and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Haresnape further notes the literary presences of Coleridge, Keats and Milton (1982:29) and all critics point to the influence of the Elizabethan dramatists, and particularly Marlowe. In an anecdote recounted in *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), Campbell himself names some of the classical sources for the poem. He claims that on his first long voyage from Durban to Oxford in 1919, the third mate threw all his “classics” overboard, saying “‘They’ll never get you anywhere, they won’t.’ Whereupon he pushed Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Dryden, Pope, Marlowe, and all my paintings and drawing materials out of the porthole into the sea” (*CW III*, 1988:286). Campbell goes on to claim that the third mate did well, as he then spent his “spare time with the sun, stars and moon, and the winds and the spray. [...] You can see the backwash of this voyage in *The Flaming Terrapin*: but of course that effort would have been impossible without all the chunks of ore stolen from Marlowe, Keats, Dryden, Pope and Milton” (*CW III*, 1988:287). This anecdote characteristically presents Campbell’s literary interests as secondary to his encounters with the physical, elemental world of the “real”. His acknowledgement of the “chunks of ore” taken from his favourite poets, however, points to the provocative rhetoric at work in the claim that “experience” trumps “literature” as the major force behind his work.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ While I am not sure that Campbell had read *Moby Dick* by 1921, in 1929 he hails it as “the greatest novel in English” in a letter to his friend and benefactor C.J. Sibbett. (*SANL*, Campbell File 1 MSB 76: 47:2). As his father had been friendly with Mark Twain, it seems likely that Campbell was well versed in late nineteenth century American literature. Parsons comments on the choice of the “Terrapin” as the myth:

As an embodiment of energy transformed into matter, the great sea creature is fittingly climactic in this sequence and a commanding representative of evolutionary advance as well as duration. But the great finback, though an habitu  of Antarctic waters, would have been unsuitable as the Ark’s pilot – *Moby Dick* had made sure of that! With resulting mythic power, Campbell chose the terrapin, made monstrous but equally evocative of the range of evolution. (Parsons, 1993:84-85)

¹¹⁵ There is a further element to this anecdote. Having deprived him of his classics, the third mate “compensated” the young Campbell by lending him the book he considered to be his “Bible”. This turned out to be a “well-thumbed” copy of the novel *Ann Veronica* – H.G. Wells’ 1909 novel about the struggles of a young woman for independence. The novel is regarded as part of the literature of the “New Woman”. What Campbell had in mind in making this the “Bible” of the third mate is intriguing. Is he showing a contrast between a new

Nicholas Meihuizen's most recent work on Campbell explores the idea that the poem's eclectic range of influences reflects the "time-warp" of the colonial education system – the notion that Campbell aspires to being a contemporary avant-garde poet, but does not have the requisite knowledge of the contemporary literary scene. Meihuizen notes that, while the rhetoric of the poem "could be seen to take something of its tone from Campbell's passionate love for the Elizabethan poets, particularly Marlowe (Campbell, 1951:254)" (2006:176), Campbell was also immersed in the English modernist scene prior to composing the poem; not only was he part of the avant-garde art scene in London, but he had also "discovered" French Symbolist poetry on his trips to Paris with T.W. Earp. He concludes that "Campbell's 'damnably poetic' utterances, then, which were so contrary to recent trends, and which were so atypical of Modernism, had more to do with a deliberate stance than literary ignorance" (Meihuizen, 2006:171). It is this deliberate, and partially misleading, appearance of literary anachronism that makes the poem a modernist curiosity.

While I agree that Campbell's stance is "deliberate", the idea that his utterances were "so atypical of Modernism" is worth further consideration. I suggest that his iconoclasm can be seen as characteristic of a form of "modernism" understood in broader terms. The limitations of the colonial, the feudal, the "backward" peripheral zones can be brought within the purview of modernist practice if this is understood as a movement influenced by emerging "global" culture, in which metropolitan aesthetics both incorporate and contend with a desire for the aesthetically "naive", real or earthbound art – an art born of local tradition and physical action, and expressed most forcefully in primitivist and fauvist traditions. These are the same traditions which Campbell would later come to forcefully reject in his immersion in Lewis's critique of the "time-obsessed" literary culture of the 1920s. At the same time, his quest for the "living" but ancient traditions of Provence and Spain in the 1930s represents a different approach to a related quest for an art that relates to both the social and the physical "external" world – the "real". Early critics valorised the poem for its "freshness", and "primitive simplicity" which, I suggest, spoke to this hunger for a language that seemed vital and able to conjure up reality, be it "rhetorical" or representational.¹¹⁶

lowbrow sentimental literature beloved of working men and the "greats" of his own canon, or is he suggesting that the third mate has educated him not only in the elements of nature, but in the emerging politics of the day? Either way, there seems to be a joke implied, at the expense of both men.

¹¹⁶ Walter Benjamin is an early critical voice in identifying the pervasiveness of this concern in response to the urban experience. In his essay on "Some Motifs in Baudelaire", for example, Benjamin identifies this hunger

Early reception

A number of critics point to the considerable critical enthusiasm for the poem on its first publication in England in 1924. One early review cited in Rowland Smith's analysis argues of the poem's narrative that:

This conception has a primitive simplicity which enables the poet to evoke those broad emotional reactions which are denied to a more sophisticated intelligence. And this perception of a direct relation between impulse and action, which, if an illusion, is peculiarly matched by a similar directness of vision. Vision is the essential of poetic style, for without it imagery degenerates into rhetoric. Rhetoric which enables a poet to sustain his inspiration is not to be despised in itself, and without rhetorical power Mr. Campbell would not have been able to carry through his design on a scale remarkable for so young a poet. But sincerity of the poetic impulse is attested throughout by the continuously concrete realization of the thought. (*TLS*, May 29, 1924, p. 337, cited in Smith, 1972:17, 18)

Here the emphasis is on the "directness of vision" and the "concrete realization of the thought" rather than the broader "theme" of the poem. This critic implies that the strength of the poem is as a form of "naive" verbal art, confident of its vision although perhaps unsophisticated in its philosophy. Rowland Smith's later analysis of the poem repeats this insight, arguing that "[Campbell's] strength does not lie in the surrealist, fantasy-world which Rimbaud creates with such compelling suggestion, but in the concreteness and vitality of his imagery" (1972:28, 29). The appreciation of "rhetorical power", as I will suggest later, has had a chequered history in twentieth century literary criticism which can, to an extent, be tracked in the responses to this poem.

For Smith, the appreciation of the poem's originality and vision in the criticism of the 1920s reflects a hunger in post-War England for a new artistic sensibility. In Smith's words, "The

with the rise of mass culture, and the consequences for human perception and experience. Speaking of Baudelaire's curious address to the reader in the opening poem of "Les Fleurs du Mal", Benjamin writes:

If conditions for a positive reception of lyric poetry have become less favorable, it is reasonable to assume that only in rare instances is lyric poetry in rapport with the experience of its readers. This may be due to a change in the structure of their experience. Even though one may approve of this development, one may be all the more hard put to it to say precisely in what respect there may have been a change. Thus one turns to philosophy for an answer, which brings one up against a strange situation. Since the end of the last century, philosophy has made a series of attempts to lay hold of the "true" experience as opposed to the kind that manifests itself in the standardized, denatured life of the civilized masses. It is customary to classify these efforts under the heading of a philosophy of life. Their point of departure, understandably enough, was not man's life in society. What they invoked was poetry, preferably nature, and, most recently, the age of myths.(1968:156)

In her reflections on Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Susan Buck-Morss (1992) points to Benjamin's interest in the role of art in restoring to us sensory experience sacrificed to modern living.

energy of the reviews themselves is a striking aspect of the cultural climate in which *The Flaming Terrapin* was written” (1972:17). Campbell’s exotic vision and vocabulary, coupled with his energetic, capacious and unapologetic style, spoke to this need. For early critics of the 1920s, then, the purported “naive inconsequence of the Argument”, as Edward Garnett put it, did not detract from the pleasure of the poetic language – indeed these “flaws”, like the “primitive simplicity” of the conception, were an important aspect of its appeal:

It would be easy for me to pull the poem to pieces, to quote passages inspired by extravagance of manner, and it is true that a cold and correct taste may be repelled by the poetic rhetoric, and by the naive inconsequence of the Argument. But the beauties are so many, the poet’s imagination so daring, his descriptive powers so fresh and triumphant, his imagery so strong and often so delicate, that the very immaturity and wildness of his Muse will interest the discerning. (Edward Garnett, *The Nation and Athenaeum*, June 7, 1924, p. 323, cited in Smith, 1972:18).

The later critical heritage

The poem has received very little serious critical attention since the early years following its publication, now serving more as a literary artefact that illustrates the themes and concerns of its contemporary context, than as a resonant text that merits serious criticism. Later twentieth century critics tend to be more reserved in their praise, foregrounding its philosophical weaknesses, as well as its excessive, and somewhat repetitious gestures. As Povey puts it,

‘His [Campbell’s] poetry, so impassioned, so virulent, so lurid, seemed only gross and excessive, even vulgar, if contrasted with the prosy rationalism of the poets who were our heroes: T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden.’ (Povey, 1977:7 in Meihuizen, 2003:16)

The fairly rapid waning of its early rising star suggests that its enthusiastic reception did indeed relate (as Smith suggests, following Campbell’s own lead) to a specific post-First World War malaise, and that the poem was, as one reviewer described it, a fresh breeze from the South.¹¹⁷ However it is also the case that early reviewers appreciated it primarily for its rhetorical force and startling imagery, rather than for any discernable argument. Recent criticism has interested itself in reevaluating the work of “rhetoric” in the poem, suggesting that the poem’s delight in its imagery indicates a philosophical stance (related in particular to Nietzsche, Vorticism, and the poet, John Davidson). The poem aspires to epic form, but this is, at times, in tension with its pagan-materialist imagery; a tension which it is the role of the

¹¹⁷ F.C. Lucas’s review in *The New Statesman* begins, “We wanted air; and here is a south-wester straight from the sea”. (Cited in Smith, 1972:16).

changeling heroes of the poem to negotiate, as will be discussed later in this chapter.¹¹⁸ Late twentieth century critics have also taken a more explicit interest in the way that the South African landscape is both source for and subject of the poem.

South African criticism

Several South African critics have tracked the influence of Campbell's colonial South African upbringing on his "modernist" poetic practices. Geoffrey Haresnape suggests that the failure of early critics to find a "thematic coherence" in the poem has to do with the failure to recognise the central importance of South Africa as both a theme and locus of the poem.¹¹⁹ Haresnape's account, as with Smith's earlier one, draws on the South African experience as more than mere exotic location – it attempts to integrate it as key to the myth that both motivates and resolves the action of the poem.

Another reading, related to the "colonial" one, develops Campbell's claim that the poem foregrounds the theme of male fertility, and its redemptive force. In his centennial biography on Campbell (2001) Joseph Pearce draws attention to the fledgling religious concerns evident in the poem; the themes "at this stage both inarticulate and unfulfilled, of the poet's emerging mysticism and spirituality", implying that the seeds of Campbell's later Catholic conversion are evident here (Pearce, 2001:52).¹²⁰ He argues that the poem's mysticism is enhanced by Campbell's personal sense of masculine potency, written as the poem is during his honeymoon period, and over the months of Mary Campbell's pregnancy with their first child (Pearce, 2001:52).¹²¹ This reading, perhaps necessarily in the constrained analytic space of a

¹¹⁸ The most recent commentary on the poem by Nicholas Meihuizen (2007) repeats the embarrassment of the later twentieth century critics, foregrounding the work of "accident" rather than what Armando Pajalich describes as "complex linguistic invention" in its verbal patterning (Meihuizen, 2007:176), and implying that Campbell is in control of neither his material nor his vision. Meihuizen's more recent account of the poem describes its conclusion as "laughable and histrionic" (2007:181); a less positive reading than his earlier account of 2003, although he does suggest that the firmness of Campbell's stance is admirable.

¹¹⁹ "They have commented upon the African and war images in the poem, yet little has been done to give a systematic explanation of their presence. But the War and Africa are not merely quarries for imagery: they are firm points around which the inner meaning of the poem is organized. Thus approached, The Flaming Terrapin is freed from much of the apparent confusion which has baffled readers in the past" (Haresnape, 1982:23).

¹²⁰ "It offers a premonition of Campbell's own future, a prophecy of paganism christened, fertilized by faith and reborn. In the early part of the poem there is a profound insight into the spiritual basis of all matter which is reminiscent of Christian philosophers such as Duns Scotus and Christian poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins and G.K. Chesterton. In spite of Campbell's later satirical lampoons of Hopkins, there is more than a trace of the Jesuit poet's concept of 'inscape' and Chesterton's philosophy of gratitude..." (Pearce, 2001:52).

¹²¹ "For Campbell, the forces of resurrection, in the form of creation – or re-creation – are symbolized by the Terrapin of the poem's title. In Eastern tradition, he informed his parents, the tortoise was 'the talisman which represents strength, longevity, endurance and courage'. It was also the symbol of the universe, 'the dome

biography, offers a significantly reduced account of the relevant strands of influence from which the poem is composed, but does point to the mythical, quasi-epic, sense of male potency played out in the poem.

Epic elements in “The Flaming Terrapin”

My own understanding of the poem is particularly influenced by Tony Voss’s description of the poem as a “brief epic”.¹²² Voss observes that the epic nature of the poem suggests that it is “designed to instruct what the poet understands to be his community in its own traditions presented in terms of “Giant forms”, beings at once human and divine, who are called . . . “heroes” in the historical’ context, to which Campbell assimilates Noah, the Angel Cowboys, Shaka and, implicitly, himself” (Voss, 2006:455). One might add to this list Samson, as well as the curious and suggestive figure of “Bellerophon, the primal cowboy”, “the dandy of the prairies” – a figure that I will return to later in this chapter.

The epic elements create a central narrative strand into which a wide range of disparate literary and historical identities can be fused, and which offers a mobile, but stable point of view from which to contemplate the disorientating “chaos” of contemporary history and of contemporary thought.¹²³ I suggest that the ambivalence of much commentary on *The Flaming Terrapin* relates to an unease both about its rhetorical nature, and the form of masculine selfhood the rhetoric seems to propose – in Voss’s terms, the apparent “traditions” of Campbell’s desired “community”. The gap between the responses of Campbell’s contemporaries and those of later twentieth century criticism marks the difference between a reception of the poem as an avant-garde force, which envisages a hybrid reinvention of the

representing the heavens and the body of the earth’. Thus the Terrapin’s progress is accompanied by a joyful and fertile song of creation” (Pearce, 2001:51).

¹²² Tony Voss (2006) characterizes *The Flaming Terrapin*, like H.E. Dhloomo’s *Valley of a Thousand Hills*, as a “brief epic”, which Northrop Frye shows to be a ““common form”” within Modernism, as is evident in certain works by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, for example. He suggests that the epic nature of Campbell’s first major poem establishes the direction of his work thereafter, in a reversal of the usual progression from lyric to epic poetry:

Identifying *The Flaming Terrapin* as ‘epic’ seems contradictory. However, although the poet was barely 23 years old when his poem was published, it is as true of Campbell as of any poet that ‘The moment in which the epic poet finally chooses his subject is the crisis of his life, as Dante and Milton at least show very clearly; and his choice, once made, almost precludes the idea of ever finding another’. Campbell made his choice early and thus in a reversal of the conventional poetic career, the episodes of his early epic seem to reappear as lyrics in his later work. (Voss, 2006: 457)

¹²³ Meihuizen, for example, cites a further critique of the poem: “[...] Geoffrey Durrant rightly points to other perceived areas of weakness in Campbell; his ‘narrow range of rhythmic patterns’, the ‘slackness in the immediate texture’ of his language, ‘which goes with a certain crudity of expression’” (Durrant, 1960:66-67, in Meihuizen, 2003:16).

classical figures of epic, and a view that treats it as expressing an anachronistic longing for the lost field of action available to the nineteenth century adventurer. Between these two readings, it could be argued, the spectacular reach of his mythic framework points to the way in which his sources of influence, both “modernist” and literary-historical, create a new, indeterminate sense of the masculine hero – one which retains a certain structure and impulse, but nonetheless marks a transitional sense of the heroic, and with it, a more exploratory notion of masculinity than is immediately apparent. Clearly this conscious invention of masculinity is closely tied to the operations of rhetoric in the poem – a further aspect of it that proves embarrassing for those of us schooled in the legacies of the “impersonal” strand of modernism.

Rhetoric and John Davidson

In the critical tradition, the poem’s rhetorical flourish is associated with the apparent failure of its “moral vision”, “theme”, or “Argument”. An important article by D.S.J. Parsons (1993) on Campbell’s “creative evolutionist” thought shows, in my view, how the “concreteness and vitality” of the imagery is not merely a virtuoso display which outshines the poem’s motivating ideas, but rather reflects certain philosophical concerns. Parsons’ analysis also sheds light on the uncertain relationship between the speaker, the protagonists and the elements to which they are subjected.

In “Roy Campbell and John Davidson” (1993), Parsons argues that Campbell’s public lecture entitled “Modern Poetry and Contemporary History” delivered in Durban in 1925, is intended as a key to the poem’s argument; it is, he suggests, “an indirect but triumphal commentary on *The Flaming Terrapin*” (1993:76), in which Campbell’s comments on the relationships between John Davidson, Bernard Shaw and Friedrich Nietzsche, make visible to the reader “the poem’s relationship to English Nietzscheanism” (1993:76). Parsons argues that, as English poetry had not absorbed or expressed the “doctrine of the Overman” espoused by G.B. Shaw or Nietzsche:

It might be surmised, then, that Campbell felt he had to be guided by John Davidson’s poems on evolution – his hymns to Matter – as the main models for his treatment of the theme in *The Flaming Terrapin*. Aspects of Davidson’s poems that Campbell would have found congenial, in addition to the combination of Nietzschean vitalism and voluntaristic evolutionism, would have been the abundance of geological and biological imagery; the employment of a self-created myth uniquely incorporating Judeo-Christian and classical motifs; the original depictions of Hell; and a style capable of violently asserting struggle, pain, and triumph. (Parsons, 1993:77, 78)

speaker hears the human soul “chanting” the refrain: “Pass, world: I am the dreamer that remains,/The Man, clear-cut against the last horizon!” (63).

If man is, as Davidson argues,¹²⁵ matter made conscious and self-conscious, then this final affirmation of the potency of the dream has overreached itself – it dismisses the material “world” from which it arises, and to which it gives expressive form. “The Man” is distinguished as much by his imaginative ability, as “the dreamer that remains”, as he is by his pioneering actions as a frontiersman, or as the “ancient hunter of the plains”. For Parsons, these final lines express the two main Davidsonian conceptions,

...that immortality resides in being part of eternal matter and not in being destined for heaven or hell (with all the moral and socio-cultural implications of belief in those alternatives), and that untrammelled man can now begin again, faced by “infinite terror, infinite greatness”... The phrase “the last horizon” is reverberative; not only does it suggest a coming dark, but also an ultimate arrival – Man in self-possession possesses the future. Simultaneously, the “I”, the poet-dreamer, asserts a permanent freedom born of a reversion to the primordial. (1993:83)

The idea of the “reversion to the primordial” here, though, only follows if the rhetoric of the lines are allowed to do their work. In the argument of the poem, the abject poetic speaker, who is initially assailed by a contemporary malaise of solipsism and a sense of futility (“Life is a dusty corridor’, I say” (34)) as well as the protagonists (Noah and his sons), who are in turn beset by spiritual demons, elemental foes and social antagonists in Part Three,¹²⁶ survive or “remain” by means of simple self-assertion – a Nietzschean act of will. To return to the

I am that ancient hunter of the plains
That raked the shaggy fitches of the Bison:
Pass world: I am the dreamer that remains,
The Man, clear-cut against the last horizon! (63)

¹²⁵ Parsons quotes the conclusion to the dedication of *The Testament of John Davidson*:

Man beholds himself not now as that fabulous monster, half-god, half-devil, of the Christian era, but as Man, the very form and substance of the universe, the material of eternity, eternity itself, become conscious and self-conscious. This is the greatest thing told since the world began. It means an end of the strangling past; an end of the conceptions of humanity and divinity, of our ideas of good and evil, of our religion, our literature, our art and polity; it means that which all men have desired in all ages, it means a new beginning, it means that the material forces of mind and imagination can now re-establish the world as if nothing had ever been thought or imagined before; it means that there is nothing greater than man anywhere; it means infinite terror, infinite greatness (*Poems* 2:544 in Parsons, 1993:82).

And: “Matter is a condensation of the invisible, imponderable Ether. ... man is therefore Ether become conscious” (*Theatocrat* 73, in Parsons 1993:84).

¹²⁶ In Part Three a “sooty Fiend” from the underworld comes “prowling on the ravaged earth”, and “whores with Nature”, spawning “Monsters perverse, and fosters feeble minds”(46). These “monsters” include “Foul mediocrity”, “old Plutocracy on gouty feet/ Limp like a great splay camel down the street;/And Patriotism, Satan’s angry son,/Rasps on the trigger of his rusty gun,/While priests and churchmen, heedless of the strife,/Find remedy in thoughts of afterlife;/Had they nine lives, O muddled and perplexed,/They’d waste each one in thinking of the next!/Contentment, like an eating slow disease,/Settles upon them, fetters hands and knees;/While pale Corruption ... swims through the reek, with movements as of one/Who, diving after pearls, down from the sun/Along the shaft of his own shadow slides/With knife in grinning jaws ...” (47).

primordial, to the seething stew of the flood, would constitute a primal loss of consciousness, and of human agency. In the poem the flood seems to stand for the primordial world of indistinct matter which must “pass” – either as in “pass by”, as the sea passes by the hull of a boat, or as in “pass on”, in the sense of cease to be. Either way, the word implies the dwindling relevance of the external world. The Davidsonian hero-speaker may be an expression of this “world”, but has become divisible from and independent of it. Thus while the “reversion to the primordial” does, as Parsons suggests, authorise the speaker’s triumph here, it also fails to establish what man “is”. Consciousness itself – “the dreamer that remains” – appears as a transcendent residue of the material world. The image of the triumph of “The Man” then, is paradoxical for it is the material world that is transient, and the human one of consciousness which is “immortal”. The force of this image stems primarily from its affirmative rhetoric. What is clear, however, is that the actions of writing, imagining and dreaming are indistinct from the actions of “doing”: at the end of the poem, the speaking, imagining (implicitly authorial) “I”, is united with the figure of Noah, the pioneer, as the ultimate survivor.

The analogy between imaginative and physical activity in the poem is expressed in striking terms. The speaker tracks in his mind’s eye the movement of the epic hero, Noah, across the globe, creating an impression that the speaking subject and the hero he depicts are indistinct from one another – heroic movement, and imaginative exploration are one. Thus the hero, “The Man”, appears as part of a strange materialist trinity – nominally Noah is the hero, the pioneer, the doer, but so is the speaker himself, the one who imagines the voyage, as is the “mindless” material spirit of the Terrapin, which nonetheless harbours an “awful fancy” – a generative, though inarticulate, impulse; a seed-thought.

This myth proposes an extraordinary set of correspondences. It appears to affirm and celebrate the complex “creative process”, as Pajalich argues, as well as the “primitive simplicity” represented in the deliberate mindlessness of the ancient Terrapin. It suggests that the latter can redeem the former without repudiating it. This could be read, as Campbell’s letter to his parents suggests, as an allegory of the relationship between the psychic ancientness of Africa (the Terrapin is seen to “raft whole continents on his back”, and he emerges from the murky depths of the ocean, the well-spring of form in both Darwinist and psychoanalytic imagery) and the jaded modernity of Europe (represented by the speaker’s tired and hopeless voice in the opening section). Such a myth might indeed “interest the

discerning”. It is a myth that may embrace Darwinist insights, but does not follow the established social Darwinist precept of the “progress” of civilisation; rather it renders a pseudo-historical narrative of ancientness and modern-ness into a timeless myth of heroic action. The myth clearly retains strong links to a Romantic notion of the mirroring between artistic genius and “world spirit”. It also further conjoins this Romantic celebration of the healing force of poetic/heroic “genius” to a Modernist vision of the futility of human endeavour, destined for the abyss of mortality without spiritual redemption. The paradox in which both matter as well as a supra-material consciousness is manifest in the figure of “the man”, cannot be resolved. Rather it displays, in rhetoric resembling that of the Romantic poets (Shelley in particular), the power of words to conjure up reality. This display is modified and mythologized by ideas derived from Nietzsche and Darwin, about the place of man in the evolutionary narrative.

Rhetoric and Nietzsche

That the poetic speaker is conscious of “truth” as figurative rather than logical is evident in the speaker’s claim in Part One that “This sudden strength that catches up men’s souls .../Stands visible to me in its true self. .../I see him as a mighty Terrapin ...” (34). The categorical claim to witness the “true self” of the “sudden strength” contradicts the speaker’s acknowledgement that a simile is at work (“I see him as”). As Nicholas Meihuizen formulates it, the problem is how “the ‘true self’ [can] be expressed in a simile, which by definition signifies through similitude not identity?” (2007:176).

The role of rhetoric here is in evolving a metaphorical device that captures the imagination. Here, Campbell’s Romanticism is inflected by his reading of Nietzsche, and Nietzsche’s explicit account of the metaphorical nature of “truth”. The “most celebrated analysis” by Nietzsche of the role of metaphor, according to Sanford Schwartz, is found in an essay entitled “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”; an essay which Schwartz suggests has “become a kind of post-structuralist manifesto” (1985:75). Schwartz offers a succinct account of Nietzsche’s “subversion of Platonism, a conquest of the metaphysical ruse through which useful fictions [such as names and concepts] are converted into eternal essences” (1985:76). Concepts are not in themselves problematic; the danger lies in the ways in which they are taken to indicate a “truth” rather than a figuration of the truth. As Nietzsche argues:

What then is truth? A moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and

rhetorically intensified, transferred and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins [Mankind] forgets that the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors and takes them to be the things themselves. (cited in Schwartz, 1985:77)

As Schwartz indicates, contemporary post-structuralist thought has drawn on the work of Friedrich Nietzsche in elaborating its critique of the truth claims of philosophical discourses which purport to be non-rhetorical. In his “Introduction” to *Deconstruction* (1982) Christopher Norris explains Nietzsche’s influence on deconstructionist thought. He cites Derrida’s description of “‘the Nietzschean *affirmation* ... of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming ... of a world of signs without fault, without truth and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation’ (Derrida 1978, p. 292). It is this dimension of Nietzsche’s thought which has not merely ‘influenced’ but in many ways uncannily pre-empted the work of deconstruction” (Norris, 1982:60).¹²⁷

Several critics observe the Nietzschean terms with which Campbell expresses his themes of rebellion and “irreverence”. In his article for the *Cape Argus*, “Adventures with a Dragon: My experiences in the Mediterranean” (1926), he claims that he had a copy of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and a copy of Lucretius in his pocket when he first went to sea at Marseilles as a young man (*CW IV*, 1988:226). In his essay, “Modern Poetry and Contemporary History” (*The Natal Witness*, 1925), Campbell comments that:

Nietzsche will always be the inspirer of youth. For it is he that insists on the right of youth to test for itself all those moral codes and values to which it is expected to submit on entering the struggle for life. (*CW IV*, 1988:179)

This is clearly a central theme of Campbell’s first significant work. In his comments on “Modern Poetry and Contemporary history”, he indicates that Nietzsche’s philosophies are central at this point to his sense of an elite community of thinkers, artists, and the physically

¹²⁷ Norris shows that one of Nietzsche’s most forceful achievements, which pre-figures deconstruction, is his engagement with the Socratic “dialectical method of eliciting ‘truth’ from a carefully contrived encounter of wisdom and ignorance”, which, Nietzsche argues, is “no more than a rhetorical ploy. Its persuasiveness, however, was such as to monopolize for itself all claims to reason, dignity and truth. As a result, philosophy renounced all dealing with rhetoric and looked upon the arts of language (especially writing) as sources of error and delusion” (Norris, 1982:60).

accomplished – the aristocracy which he will come to name the “equestrian nation”.¹²⁸ But in the same essay he insists that Nietzsche should be read “as a poet” (*CW IV*, 1988:178) and not a philosopher.¹²⁹

In Campbell’s work, then, Nietzsche’s presence is discernible not only in the myth itself – a celebration of “irreverence”, and of a world view that interests itself in contestations rather than moral content – but also in Campbell’s rhetorical, apparently anachronistic, delight in the proliferation of metaphors, similes and illustrative narrative digression.

Vorticism

Writing about the influence of Vorticism on the poem, Armando Pajalich comments on “the abundance of similes, those less ‘modern’ figures”:

The poem is studded with more than 130 similes (84 of which resort to ‘like’ as a connective), which means an average of one simile every ten lines. Campbell was not content with the visionary unified sensibility expressed through metaphors and analogies. He needed a constant re-elaboration of one datum in terms of another, producing a sequence of juxtapositions which divert the reader’s attention from a mere ‘phantom’ plot to a chain of signifiers which are relevant in themselves, per se. This is particularly so in those passages where similes succeed one another and in those extended similes which remind the reader of Milton’s Homeric similes.... (Pajalich, 1988:15)

As Pajalich asserts, this is a return to poetry in the “grand style” – to Milton, to the Elizabethans, and Marlowe. He also foregrounds the impact of Nietzsche, as the most contemporary authority behind this return to the overtly rhetorical, to grand gestures, to the generative energy of figurative language reproducing and showing itself at work. For

¹²⁸ In *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), Campbell claims that he is celebrated in Provence, not because of his literary accomplishments, but “due entirely to my prowess with horses and cattle; this proves me to be a true citizen of the ‘Equestrian Nation’ as we call it” (*CW III*, 1988:296). He develops this notion in relation both to literature and myth, but also to the lives of his contemporaries. Perhaps the best known of his “equestrian” friends was the famous Swiss long rider, Aimé Tschiffely, whom Campbell befriended in London in 1941 (Alexander, 1982:190). Campbell wrote a Preface to Tschiffely’s *Little Princess Turtle Dove* (1957) and gave a commemorative talk in his honour at the Argentine embassy (date unknown, in *CW IV*, 1988:607), which offers a moving account of Campbell’s vision of the fading world of the “equestrian nation”. The link between Nietzsche and the “equestrian nation” is one Campbell makes early on, when he argues that Nietzsche is “the prophet of a physical and mental aristocracy. The best teaching to be derived (sic) from Nietzsche, namely, the need of a rich supply of great personalities, the love of the earth, and the love of the body, is remote from ordinary politics” (“Modern Poetry and Contemporary History” (1925) in *CW IV*, 1988:180).

¹²⁹ Campbell says of Nietzsche: “In the first place Nietzsche should be read as a poet, not as a philosopher. He should be read as we read Marlowe, exulting in the splendid buffoonery of his more extravagant passages. Nietzsche’s chief disadvantage was that he was a bookworm... His ideas on war were formed before the world-war, and so they do not count with us, who see that warfare in its perfection will probably extinguish civilisation and, with it, the possible evolution of the superman” (*CW IV*, 1988:178).

Pajalich, the imagery and metaphors at work point to a vision of the triumph of human imagination. By way of example, Pajalich traces the image of “thunder” in the poem, arguing that it is:

...nothing but the concretization of strength and vigour, for which Campbell shows utter worship. However, the Superman, in Campbell as in Nietzsche and as in Lewis, is never the leader of armies, the politician or the empire-builder; he is the Artist, the Creator, the Thinker. So, the thunder image modulates into *music* and *song*, or alternatively (and less frequently) into a pageant of *flowers*. In short, energy (through the thunder image) turns into a form of aesthetic pleasure and creation, auditory (music) and visual (flower): the poem’s main target appears in the end to be the exhilaration felt before artistic creation and creation in general. (1988:17)

Pajalich shows the ways in which its internal patterning of images, narrative movement and contrasting digressions into discursive commentary constitute a “series of opposing semantic planes that do not lay claim to referentiality”, arguing that:

[T]he poem is run through by patterns of words and images almost for their own sake, as if approaching the use of colours or rhythms or forms – what Pound called “primary pigments” – for their own sake, in abstract or non-representational art. (1988:18)

The “patterning” within the poem includes words that “denote spiralling, circling, movements” – that is to say, terms associated with Pound’s and Lewis’s notion of the Vortex, which conveys a contrast between “a swinging and rolling progress” and “verbs denoting standing or rising up: [...] The general impression communicated is of life as strife, as an agitated rolling on of forces from which man can extricate himself...” (1988:21). In my view, the most striking of such images expresses the Davidsonian idea of matter coming to consciousness in the form of Man. This takes place in response to the call of the mighty terrapin, whose passage over sea and land arouses the world to life:

Freed from the age-long agonies of birth
This living galleon oars himself along
And roars his triumph over all the earth
Until the sullen hills burst into song.
His beauty makes a summer through the land,
And where he crawls upon the solid ground,
Gigantic flowers, exploding from the sand,
Spread fans of blinding colour all around.
His voice has roused the amorphous mud to life –
Dust thinks: and tired of spinning in the wind,
Stands up to be a man and feel the strife
Of brute-thoughts in the jungle of his mind. (35)

The “voice” and “roars” of the Terrapin himself have the same effect as Shelley’s clarion trumpet in “Ode to the West Wind” – both a herald of a coming force, and an invitation to be part of its elemental transformations. But the image of “Dust thinks: and tired of spinning in the wind, /Stands up to be a man” is, as Pajalich argues, a Vorticist one. Here the cycling of energy into a centre of intensity produces Man himself. Man’s very existence is a response to the call of the primeval figured in the Terrapin.

With Wyndham Lewis’s work chiefly in mind, in 1914 Ezra Pound devised a description of the poetic image (hitherto defined by his “Imagist” manifestos) as a Vortex, the model for which is a whirlpool, or a waterspout. For Pound the poetic image was a space in which disparate ideas are held together in a compressed but open-ended way – thus “whereas symbolist’s symbols had a fixed value, the Imagist’s images had a variable significance” (Stock, 1970:207). The image is thus not a single “idea”, “but a radiant node or cluster”; in Pound’s later formulation “it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which and through which and into which, ideas are constantly rushing” (Stock, 1970:208).¹³⁰ Hugh Kenner explains that for Pound, the Vortex is not the water itself, but “a patterned energy made visible by the water” (1971:146). That this conception is a modernist reformulation of the “vitalism” that interested the Romantics is evident from Kenner’s further comments:

Pound did not chance on such a conception lightly. Patterns made visible had occupied him when he wrote in 1912 of “our kinship to the vital universe, to the tree and the living rock,” having “about us the universe of fluid force, and below us the germinal universe of wood alive, of stone alive”: man being “chemically speaking ... a few buckets of water, tied up in a complicated sort of fig-leaf,” but capable of having his thoughts in him “as the thought of the tree is in the seed.” “Energy creates pattern,” he was writing three years later, explaining “Imagisme.” “Emotion is an organizer of form.” (Kenner, 1971:146)

Pajalich’s close analysis of the verbal patterning within Campbell’s poem points to the unfolding of such “patterned energies”, driven by “emotion”. The central driving emotion is, as Parsons identifies, the creative and rebellious joy inspired by “the proud irreverence of man”, which in turn is a product of the “awful fancy” of the pre-verbal leviathan.

¹³⁰ In his biography of Pound, Stock points out that the first issue of *Blast*, the “Vorticist” magazine run by Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis in 1914, seems to have been conceived before the notion of Vorticism was devised. He observes: “The advent of *Blast*, which was still two months away, was announced on the back of the *Egoist* of 15 April [1914] in an advertisement which proclaimed: ‘End of Christian Era’. There was no mention of Vorticism. All the material dealing with the new movement, and the name itself, seem to have been added to the first issue at the last minute, after a good part of the magazine had already been printed” (Stock, 1970:199).

The figure of Man

Pajalich observes that, in spite of the poem's many "Vorticist" techniques,¹³¹ the few instances of the image of the Vortex are applied mainly to Noah himself:

Images of weapons and machines, as well as terms denoting rolling and spiralling movements, again link *The Flaming Terrapin* with *Enemy of the Stars* and *Tarr*. However, Campbell rarely makes use of the image of the vortex or of its implications (of distortion of perspectives and viewpoints, of abolition of linear progress of time, argument, logic and structure). Significantly it is only Noah who is described as a vortex. He is not part of an allegory. He stands for an idea, an intuition of that energy which is intrinsic to all human beings... (1988:21)

Taken together, Davidson's and Pajalich's arguments show that for Campbell, the image of the "vortex" through which all energy passes, and which reduces and distils matter is applied specifically to the (Nietzschean) figure of Man. As Campbell claims, and as early commentary on the poem attests, this figure is at the centre of the poem's reparative and regenerative myth, which not only redeems a world beset by the meaningless deaths of young men and particularly young male artists in the First World War, but also speaks to a sense that art and language themselves have become devalued and impotent; a recurring modernist theme. The internal logic of the poem, its own parallel plane of representation that Pajalich reveals, suggest that the redemptive myth at work is, unsurprisingly, as much about the "re-enchanting" powers of language¹³² as it is about the potential of the young white poet from the south, the "outsider", to redeem the contemporary condition of European history.

¹³¹ Pajalich comments:

Once again, such an extended use of comparisons and Miltonic similes - whose effect is magnified by the carousel of analogies and personifications - may remind us of Shelley's rhetorics but, more importantly, are also a peculiarity of Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars* and *Tarr*, in which the reader is quite dizzied by them. Other devices indicate how the poet meant to lead the reader's interest from signified to signifier: for instance, the Miltonic use of geography, according to which we find a sequence of Coloradoes (plural!), Congoes (plural!) and Amazons; or the very personal and transgressive use of religion, according to which we feel pity for a little powerless God, and envy for happy, dynamic and manly angel cowboys (which might well figure in a surrealist painting or in a Ginsberg poem). More revealing of Campbell's design in this poem is his use of imagery and word-repetitions. The significant and prevailing semantic areas and clusters of images are easily singled out. The central image, which gives the poem its title, is also its central, generative, seminal nucleus: The Flaming Terrapin is also called a mighty terrapin (61) and sudden strength (54). It consists of borrowed vigour (67) and when, his labours done, he disappears, he causes a dense/ Vortex of thunder (57-58), while his vital fluid becomes rain, flowers and music... (II, 92-93). (Pajalich, 1988:16)

¹³² In a compelling analysis of Campbell's verbal habits, Graham Pechey shows their contribution to his "comprehensively re-encharmed world". These characteristic formations include pluralizing nouns, especially topographical ones, which relate to his "characteristic evocation of energetic movement and his self-confessed attachment to hyperbole or the superlative degree of everything. Periphrasis and the portmanteau word, for their part, work to surprise us with the ordinary, and in opposite though complementary ways: the former by its half-riddling defamiliarization stretched beyond the isolated word almost to the length of a whole poem; the latter by its making of words that are themselves poems." (2006:63)

The South African landscape

The exotic vocabulary associated with the South African landscape and its animal occupants lends energy to a vision of an alternative landscape to that of post-war Europe. When, in Part Five of the poem, the Ark finally disgorges its cargo on the mountain-top, the animals are described as a “torrent of splendour”, which comes “Flashing and glittering” from the ark. They include “Panthers with sparkled hides,/And tigers scribbled with flame,/And lions in grisly trains/Cascading their golden manes.” The overwhelming impression of these lines though, is of frolicking herds of southern African antelope:

The wildebeest frisked with the gale....
Frail oribi sailed with their golden-skinned
And feathery limbs laid light on the wind.
And the springbok bounced, and fluttered, and flew,
Hooping their spines on the gaunt karroo....
And the sun-dappled herds a-skipping to the song, go
Kicking up the dust on the great, grey plains –
Tsessebe, Kudu, Buffalo, Bongo,
With the fierce wind foaming in their manes. (58)

The link between this riot of living energy and the Terrapin himself is set out in Part Four when the Terrapin returns “his borrowed vigour to the Earth”. His “vital fluid” then, “straining through the pores/ Of the vast ocean” gives rise to clouds, and showers of rain, which in turn “Rouse up the soil to energies of birth”, by generating both plant and animal life, which are described as the “livelier forms” of the Terrapin’s vigour. This, in turn, “flows like music” through the bodies of the “swift wild creatures” pasturing on the plains, and finally their energy passes through man: “And Man, triumphant, feels their strength and speed/Thrill through his frame as music through a reed” (60, 61).

By transforming the veldt into a mythical setting for the play of primal and elemental energies, Campbell imagines the (heroic) restoration of colour and energy to that other, blasted, landscape on his mind – that of post First World War Europe. Campbell was familiar with the way in which this world had been characterised by T.S. Eliot as “The Waste Land”,¹³³ and depicted in desolate terms by the war poetry he had come across in *Coterie* in 1919/1920 (Haresnape, 1982:19). He would also have been familiar with Wyndham Lewis’s angular and bleak “Vorticist” paintings of war landscapes. His vision of music, colour, and

¹³³ Joseph Pearce argues that within the poem, “submerged but omnipotent like the Terrapin itself, is the hidden influence of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, published 18 months earlier, with its post-war angst and superficial cynicism pointing towards possible resurrection” (Pearce, 2001:51)

animal energy and beauty forms a striking and relieving contrast to the shock and horror recorded by his European contemporaries.

In Campbell's version of the modernist fantasy of a language of immediacy, thought does not intervene between existence and action. Like the "vital fluid" of the Terrapin's "vigour", the force of words is indistinguishable from elemental and material forces: "Action and flesh cohere in one clean fusion/Of force with form: the very ethers breed/Wild harmonies of song: the frailest reed/Holds shackled thunder in its heart's seclusion" (33). Words, that is to say, express the hidden energy of matter.

The force of the rhetorical, and of linguistic effect, is what stands – and the poem shows this in its use of "concrete imagery". As Tony Voss argues, with reference to Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and his work on William Blake, *Fearful Symmetry*, the demand by commentators, including Campbell himself, for an identifiable theme and body of content for the poem, is doomed to fall short of the mark:

Once Campbell commits himself to his mythic narrative, he takes on the 'cyclic vision in poetry . . . the true epic . . . a drama of creation, struggle, redemption and restoration'. Misread, for content, this will often yield a banal morality or 'naïve inconsequence': however, 'Literature may have life, reality, experience, nature, imaginative truth, social conditions, or what you will for its content; but literature itself is not made out of these things. Poetry can only be made out of other poems'. (Voss, 2006:455)

If linguistic effect is acknowledged as key to the poem's intent, then the lingering imagery of both colonial masculinity and classical epic appear as material for modernist narrative; a narrative which simultaneously destabilizes these forms by showing them to be less a body of content than a thread of impulse – in Kenner's description, an "emotion" that "organizes form" – in an highly rhetorical "brief epic".

The Dandy of the Prairies

In this chapter I have suggested that the poem engages the modernist interest in the failure of heroic action following the democratic upheavals of the turn of the century and the shattering effects of the First World War, and inflects this concern according to contemporary philosophical and poetic trends. I suggest that the organizing "emotion" of the poem is invested particularly in the eccentric rewriting of heroic male action, a theme which holds the

diverse influences and concerns together. A striking example of this is in the depiction of Bellerophon, the tamer of the winged horse Pegasus in classical mythology, as “the primal cowboy”; an image which brings twentieth century modes of masculinity, exported through early Western film and fiction, into line with a long lineage of western heroes, but also with the contemporary forms of entertainment characteristic of the so-called “Jazz Age”. The figure of the cowboy had been well-circulated as a spectacle by 1922, both by the travelling Wild West shows (for example Buffalo Bill’s in 1890 and then again in 1906 in Paris) and early Western film. The first International Rodeo held in 1924 at Wembley Stadium, showcased the skills of American cowboys and cowgirls. The image of Bellerophon as a “primal cowboy” in the poem melds this contemporary fashionable manly image with an “eternal” form of the masculine heroic. I suggest that this marriage of time-bound fashion to ageless spiritual concerns replays the interests of one of the poets who had a lifelong influence on Campbell, Charles Baudelaire.

In the essay, “The Painter of Modern Life”, first published in 1863, Baudelaire explores the role of art in capturing not only the lasting and unchangeable aspects of beauty, but also the ephemeral aspects of social life, including fashion and style. He is interested in the types of artistic consciousness which have the capacity for seeing “modernity”, by which he means, “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable” (1964:13). Campbell’s understanding of the “dandy” reflects the heroic status that Baudelaire accords this figure. Baudelaire’s essay challenges the notion that this figure is superficially committed to a life of material concerns and fatuous self-styling. “Dandyism”, in his view, is a form of self-expression which “heroically” resists the bland homogeneity of a modern democratic society. He argues:

Dandyism appears above all in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall. In the disorder of these times, certain men who are socially, politically and financially ill at ease, but are all rich in native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow. Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence [...] Dandyism is a sunset; like the declining daystar it is glorious, without heat, and full of melancholy. But alas, the rising tide of democracy, which invades and levels everything, is daily overwhelming these last representatives of human pride and pouring floods of oblivion upon the footprints of these stupendous warriors. (1964:28, 29)

Campbell’s own notion of a “mental and physical aristocracy” resonates with these comments: in *The Flaming Terrapin* it is his panacea to both the modern malaise of

scepticism, solipsism and faithlessness, and to the Victorian confidence in progress, Empire and perfectibility. The poem's contribution to the Baudelairean schema, I suggest, is to out the cowboy or colonial outrider not as a brutish, boorish figure, but on the contrary as a dandy – a conscious and coolheaded figure committed to his own etiquette and self-styling, and his own distinctive moral code.¹³⁴

That this is a mythology of enduring popular appeal is evident in the century-long success of the Western genre in film. Stanley Cavell's study *The World Viewed: Reflections on the ontology of film* (1972) draws on Baudelaire's account of modern "types", to show their development within this genre.¹³⁵ He shows that Baudelaire's typologies, along with his interest in settings, gestures, fashion, and movement, can be read as anticipating film. The hero of the cowboy narrative, Cavell convincingly shows, accords with Baudelaire's definition of dandyism, in which he claims:

It is first and foremost the burning need to create for oneself a personal originality, bounded only by the limits of the proprieties. It is a kind of cult of the self which can nevertheless survive the pursuit of happiness to be found in someone else – in woman, for example; which can even survive all that goes by in the name of illusions. It is the joy of astonishing others, and the proud satisfaction of never oneself being astonished. (1972:27, 28)

This feature of "never being astonished", Cavell argues, is associated with the idea of the "hidden fire" of the cowboy-hero. He represents only a sense of trust in himself, and his own code, which the audience must be ready to believe:

Our conviction in the strength of the hero depends upon our conviction in the strength and purity of character he has formed to keep his fires banked ... He does not *know* he will succeed; what he knows is himself, his readiness. The private hero must be a hero of privacy. (1972:56)¹³⁶

¹³⁴ In *Broken Record* (1934) Campbell comments on the difference between South African and South American "cowboy" culture, and the popularised one of the U.S.A. and Mexico. He writes:

Our Boer poetry is not equal to that of Peru or Chile. But it is infinitely finer and more intellectual than the shallow Californian and New Mexican stuff, which is nostalgic, Dowsonish, Cynaresque. 'I'm a poor lonesome cowboy.' 'Lie down little doggies,' etc. Homesick, pale, negative stuff with a few good images which I pocketed and put to better use. 'The wolf is my parson on his pulpit of bones' – that is one of their lines, and a good one. But in all cowboy poetry there is the howl of the coyote. South Americans and South Africans are vertical poets. The Yankee cowboy is in the horizontal modernist movement. All his poems are 'Blues'. Most of ours are hymns. Poetry has gone to the Southern Hemisphere: it is really a pastoral art [...] All European and American poetry is full of worries etc.; but the engine of poetry can only be driven by the red fires of love or hate and the sparkling clear water of meditation. No English poet (and only a few Irish ones) have any real enthusiasm. (*CW, III*, 1988:123)

¹³⁵ Cavell's Baudelairean account of the cowboy figure was pointed out to me by Ian Rijdsdijk.

¹³⁶ The figuration of "unexpressed masculine depth", Cavell argues, resurfaces later in film history where the cowboy transmutes into the careless heroic youth. Following Baudelaire, Cavell argues that there is an important and overlooked value to the gestures of youthful masculinity in film:

The Flaming Terrapin explores and represents a hybrid range of masculine forms of “distinction” – forms both ancient and modern – and which incorporate the actions of frontiersmen in a range of guises. That Campbell has the image of the dandy in mind is clear from his depiction of that “primal cowboy”, Bellerophon, as “the dandy of the prairies”. Bellerophon is described as “dashed with stars and splashed with stinging spray” implying that this classical cowboy is also a seafarer, and even perhaps, given that he has the gift of flight, the prototype for the pilots and astronauts who will, later in the century, become the figural heirs (as in, for example, Tom Wolfe’s *The Right Stuff*) to the fading forms of modern lone cowboy, nineteenth century stroller or Renaissance seafarer.

Writing of nineteenth century dandyism, Ellen Moers explains its enduring appeal as a mode of self-representation that cannot be appropriated to a cause or class,¹³⁷ showing that “the ambiguous symbol of the dandy brought together ideas and attitudes of the most unlikely contemporaries” in both France and England (1960:13). Her account of Beau Brummell, the figure with whom the dandy is defined, explains his extraordinary rise in a period which has a certain resonance with post-World War I England – the context of the rise of the Oxford 1920s “dandies” in Martin Green’s study. Moers shows how Brummell emerged “in the uneasy atmosphere of shifting perspectives and sinking values that followed on the French Revolution” (1960:17), one in which aristocracy had lost its rights, but the question of what represented human value hung in the air. In terms which resonate with Campbell’s “nostalgia” for a world that never quite existed, Moers suggests:

The persistence of the dandy ideal explains much about the bourgeois spirit of the time. Behind the dourness, the prudery, the heavy earnestness of the Victorian pose lay a tentative nostalgia for anti-bourgeois virtues. The decorative surface, the blind assurance, the wrongheaded (but inescapable) *rightness* of the dandy figure remained

The vanity in the young man’s careless slouch has perhaps not been sufficiently appreciated; but it should also be recognized that this is not the vanity of personal appearance or fashion, but the vanity of personal freedom: of distinctness not distinction. It is the democratic equivalent of the dandy. Its guiding myth is the myth of youth itself, that life has not yet begun irretrievably, that the time is still for preparation, and that when the time comes to declare oneself, one will be recognized. (Cavell, 1972:68)

¹³⁷ Moers writes:

Throughout the nineteenth century the rising majority called for equality, responsibility, energy; the dandy stood for superiority, irresponsibility, inactivity. Inexcusably, in all his ghostly elegance, he haunted the Victorian imagination. Carlyle could deride him as a thing made by a tailor; the Victorians could denounce him as Not-a-Gentleman; but the novelists could not avoid the dandy. Finding it impossible to imagine either heroism without dandyism or a truly heroic dandy, Thackeray invented the Novel-without-a-Hero. And Dickens, disappointed in his success, expressed the tragedy of failure in the form of the dandy – the man who had failed to find a function, but was important nonetheless by the shape of his existence. (1960:13)

somehow attractive, even to those outraged at the thought of squandering talent, energy and money on such achievements....

We are today legatees of the Victorian ambivalence. In our dissatisfaction with utopia we marvel at the *possibility* of ignoring progress, despising community and adoring self. (1960:14).

As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, Campbell himself would have fitted more neatly into the “rogue” than the “dandy” classification in the schema presented by Moers and Green. But this early poem suggests that he finds in the aristocratic cult of the self epitomized by “dandyism” a source of renewal as potent and celebratory as the energy and colour of his “southern” landscape.

Conclusion

The Flaming Terrapin was published in 1924 by Jonathan Cape, through the efforts of Colonel T.E. Lawrence, who had been given the manuscript by Campbell’s good friend, the painter Augustus John. In *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), Campbell recounts Lawrence’s response to the poem as follows:

I have a letter which he wrote to Cape about my first book: - “Normally rhetoric so bombastic would have sickened me. But what originality, what energy, what freshness and enthusiasm, and what a riot of glorious imagery and colour! Magnificent I call it!” (CW III, 1988:345)

T.E. Lawrence, himself a dandy of a sort, was made famous for later generations by David Lean’s 1962 film, *Lawrence of Arabia*, loosely based on Lawrence’s memoirs of his participation in the Arab revolt against the Turks during World War I, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. As Silverman explores in her analysis of Lawrence’s biographical self-representations, he had cultivated his identity over time in diverse, even opposed ways: in his years as “Lawrence of Arabia”, his self-styling as an Arabian warrior prince was both dandified, and part of what Campbell might have called an “equestrian aristocracy”; but in later years Lawrence committed himself to the facelessness of rank and file, at the service of British military authority.¹³⁸ While Campbell tells us that he had not heard of “Lawrence of

¹³⁸ Silverman explores the link between Lawrence’s sexual masochism, and his chosen anonymity as an ordinary RAF officer in his post-war years, which appeared to “annihilate” his previously flamboyant, aggrandized heroic self, in the service of the military machinery. He had also changed his name to Shaw, in an effort to evade the reputation of Colonel Lawrence. Silverman writes, “feminine masochism provides the psychic agency whereby Lawrence effects a retreat from a heroic masculinity. It also functions as the libidinal support for an egalitarian social unity, albeit one strictly subordinate to a higher authority” (1992:335). These comments are highly suggestive for a reading of Campbell. While Campbell left no explicit record either of sexual experience, or of the eroticism of dress for example (such as Lawrence’s remarkable descriptions of the different experiences of wearing military uniform or Arab robes), a similar tension between a “masochistic” and a

Arabia” at the time that John forwarded *The Flaming Terrapin* to him,¹³⁹ it seems appropriate that a figure with such a complex and stylized relationship to British military masculinity should have taken such a strong interest in the poem. Perhaps what Lawrence recognized in Campbell’s poem was the Baudelairean blend of the eternal and the ephemeral at work in its heroic figures – the multiple ways in which the figure of the dandy both expresses and rejects his culture, and within the ambit of modernist writing, joins a global “aristocratic” community not through his specific beliefs or actions, but through his iconoclastic gestures.



“heroic” masculinity is certainly evident in his story. For him too, the military is a place of camaraderie and “impersonality”, in which the ego subjects itself to the larger forces of history and community. But, as with Lawrence, Campbell’s own iconoclasm works against this apparent humility and invisibility in equal measure.¹³⁹ In *Light on a Dark Horse* Campbell writes: “While I was sitting to John for my portrait, now in Pittsburgh, he told me that he had given my manuscript to Colonel T.E. Lawrence who was highly enthusiastic. I had never heard of Lawrence of Arabia, and when a tiny man in uniform tried to get in to a very rowdy party at my sister-in-law’s rooms in Charlotte Street, at which we were playing rugby, Cecil Gray, myself and some others mistook him for a gatecrasher and gave him the cold shoulder.” (*CW III*, 1988:345)

Chapter Four: *Adamastor* (1930) - Assertion and ambivalence in the modernist South African lyric

From “Benediction”

Yet, unguarded by an Angel’s secret care,
The sun intoxicates this outcast child;
In all he eats and drinks he is aware
Of nectar and ambrosia, pure and mild,

He plays with winds and clouds; his heritage
Is song; his road is Calvary; thus stirred,
The spirit following his pilgrimage
Laments to see him carefree as a bird.

[...]

“O Lord, be blest! for suffering is our need
If we would cure our gross impurities;
It is an essence strangely pure, decreed
To fit the strong for holy ecstasies.

I know You keep the Poet’s place not least
Within the ranks of sacred Congregations;
That he, by You, is bidden to the feast
Of Thrones, of Virtues, and of Dominations.

I know that anguish breeds nobility,
Nobility untouched by earth or hell,
And that to weave a mystic crown for me,
Must tax the universe and time as well.

- From Charles Baudelaire, *Flowers of Evil* (trans. Friedman, 1962)¹⁴⁰

The poems in Campbell’s first published collection of poetry, *Adamastor* (1930), explore themes of alienation and exile. The lyrics in this volume have less of a triumphalist tone than *The Flaming Terrapin*. They can be seen to refine and embrace a notion of creative suffering in a range of contexts, and to inflect it in ways specific to Campbell’s South African concerns. In particular, they extend the notion of “exile” to one of a permanent condition of loneliness and homelessness, a characteristic theme of modernist writing in general and an important precursor to late twentieth century and early twenty-first century literary reflections on notions of “home”.

¹⁴⁰ I have used Friedman’s translation rather than Campbell’s here to demonstrate that the thematic resonances between Baudelaire and Campbell are not specious. Campbell’s quite different translation of “La Benediction”, which makes use of his own characteristic vocabulary, is reproduced in Appendix 1.

Exile and Modernism

Campbell's outsider status has been seen by his contemporaries and his critics as linked to his boorish colonialism, as is explored in chapter 1. This position also, paradoxically, throws him into the company of other, equally dislocated, modernist "outsiders". Raymond Williams has argued that this condition of "exile" for the modernist writer was both desired and sought after, and he associates this with the real conditions of emigration and circulation in the turbulent years following the First World War. Speaking of early twentieth century Europe and Britain, he notes in his short lecture, "When Was Modernism" (1989) that:

Such endless border-crossing at a time when frontiers were starting to become much more strictly policed and when, with the First World War, the passport was instituted, worked to naturalize the thesis of the *non*-natural status of language. The experience of visual and linguistic strangeness, the broken narrative of the journey and its inevitable accompaniment of transient encounters with characters whose self-presentation was bafflingly unfamiliar, raised to the level of universal myth this intense, singular narrative of unsettlement, homelessness, solitude and impoverished independence: the lonely writer gazing down on the unknowable city... (1990:34)¹⁴¹

The condition of "exile" as well as the outsider status of the artist is a well-remarked theme within modernist writings, perhaps best represented by Stephen Dedalus's fantasy of flight into exile from the restrictions of "home" and the demands of national (Irish) history in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Exile, as Williams's comments indicate, offers both loss and compensation; the end of one sort of "identity" in favour of a new, less nameable, but shared and mythologized state of being.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ "The life of the émigré was dominant among the key groups, and they could and did deal with each other. Their self-referentiality, their propinquity and mutual isolation all served to represent the artist as necessarily estranged, and to ratify as canonical the works of radical estrangement. So, to *want* to leave your settlement and settle nowhere like Lawrence or Hemingway, becomes presented, in another ideological move, as a normal condition" (1990:35).

¹⁴² Edward Said's reflections on the conditions under which Eric Auerbach wrote his magisterial account of literary criticism, *Mimesis*, exemplify the creative potential of exile for twentieth (and now twenty first) century writers displaced by warring nationalisms or ideologies. Auerbach wrote the book in Istanbul in a state of exile from Europe during the Second World War, because he was Jewish. With reference to Auerbach's apologetic explanation of the conditions of writing, Said concludes that this work is "not only a massive reaffirmation of the Western cultural tradition, but also a work built upon a critically important alienation from it ... built on an agonizing distance from it" (1983:8). Salman Rushdie's title essay in his collection, *Imaginary Homelands* (1992) also engages with this theme. He considers the problem of the exiled and eccentric relationship to homeland from the perspective of a writer who may be censured for his distance from his "native culture", and asks the important question of whether this distance "opens any doors" (1992:13). He says of the condition of "straddling two cultures" that "however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not infertile territory for a writer to occupy" (1992:15), and warns that the alternative may lead to a definition of "homeland" that is dangerously close to that of the South African apartheid state to indicate segregated and ostensibly "culturally pure" regions. While there are clearly significant differences between voluntarily chosen and politically enforced forms of exile, this "modernist" theme, which draws on classical epic models, resonates deeply with late twentieth century literature, in a wide range of contexts.

The poet as “outsider” in *Adamastor*

This volume contains a number of Campbell’s most famous and most anthologized lyrics, many of which were written in the mid- to late 1920s, around the time of his resignation from *Voorslag*, in particular. Peter Alexander suggests that this crisis precipitated a period of intense creativity. He says:

During that month [August 1926] in a brilliant burst of creativity, he wrote several of the best poems of *Adamastor*: great cries of loneliness, defiance and despair: “The Serf”, “The Zulu Girl”, “To a Pet Cobra”, “The Making of a Poet”, and “Tristan da Cunha” were all written in these weeks. (1982:56)

This sweeping formulation does not do justice to the poems, as critics have noted;¹⁴³ and in particular, it misses the poet’s own awareness of the creative and generative nature of “loneliness” and “despair”. It does, though, point to the thematic concern with the figure of the outsider that runs through the volume, and the attendant meditations on exile. In this chapter, I want to build on Tony Voss’s suggestion that, taken as a whole, the *Adamastor* volume charts “the voyage to exile... from the desert of colonial bourgeois society to the ‘frugal pastures’ of the Camargue” (1988:8). This geographical “exile” can be seen as a figure for an interior questioning of identity – the lyrical speaking voices in these poems not only pose the problem of isolation from society, but query the notion of a stable self through the multiple, often ambivalent, identifications and perspectives of the speaking “I”.

The “Dedication to Mary Campbell” which opens the volume introduces this concern, and offers (somewhat disappointingly) the love of the poet for his “muse” as a solution to the problem which has yet to be presented. This poem describes the poet as “born” of “his own disdain” in “dead lands where men like brutish herds/Rush to and fro by aimless frenzies born”. The contrast between his higher purpose and the banal commercial interests of his society is more the theme of the poem than the merits of his wife. He describes himself as a “monstrous changeling” who “brings no increase to their hoard of gold,/ Who lives by sterner law than they have known/And worships, even where their idols reign,/ A god superbly stronger than their own” (*CWI*, 1985:105).¹⁴⁴ This dedication was written in January 1929, after his reconciliation with Mary and in the early stage of their new life together in Provence (Pearce, 2001:107). It seems opportunistic in that the near split between them becomes an

¹⁴³ Guy Butler, for example, responds: “Can any intelligent reading of those poems permit us to lump them all together merely as cries of ‘loneliness, defiance, and despair?’” (1982:68)

¹⁴⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all the poems dealt with in this chapter are taken from the *Adamastor* (1930) volume in the *Collected Works I* (1985).

occasion to introduce the social exclusion of the poet in somewhat self-pitying terms. But the volume as a whole addresses this theme in a range of ways which are more interesting than this when considered together, and when regarded in the light of the Baudelairean treatment of the “outcast” artist, as in the poem cited as epigraph. A number of these poems were written, or at least conceived, before the Campbell’s marital crisis of 1928, and some were devised before the *Voorslag* crisis of 1926. In my view, these “crises” sharpened an already established theme of the redemptive state of exile that he claims for the poetic “outsider”.

The poems address this theme through a series of analogies; in one group of poems Campbell presents his modernist version of an “ethical bestiary”, in which the characteristics of an emblematic animal are invoked to represent the autonomy and strength of the poetic speaker. In another group, human “outsiders” come to serve a related function, with complex results. As I will discuss later, there is an important politically informed debate among critics about the nature of the speaker’s relationship to the human objects of contemplation, particularly in the famous shorter lyrics “The Zulu Girl” and “The Serf”, both of which were written in 1926 (Alexander, 1982:63). While some critics, such as Meihuizen, Voss, and Crewe, have suggested that the poetic speaker identifies with the figures in these poems, the “surlly” or “sullen” sufferers of quasi-feudal labour systems, for other critics, such as Bunn and Cronin, Campbell has reappropriated these “timeless” figures to serve his vision of a world of orderly social relations, invested with a pleasurable frisson of the danger of retribution for colonial and capitalist exploitation. Certainly when juxtaposed to the celebration of the “princely” characteristics of the outsider celebrated in particular poems such as “Mazeppa”, “The Albatross”, and “Horses on the Camargue”, the subalternity of these labouring protagonists seems abject and base. On the other hand, I will argue that these poems should also be read as part of Campbell’s interest in the ways in which outsider figures, particularly, but not solely, that of the poet-speaker, enable an engagement with timelessness; a way out of history which is simultaneously liberating and disturbing. The two famous lyrics that use the imagery of a rock formation – the island in “Tristan da Cunha”, or the looming rock faces of Table Mountain in “Rounding the Cape” – are among the most interesting poetic explorations of this problem, and I will conclude the discussion in this chapter with close attention to these two poems.

Campbell's bestiary

A number of short poems establish the correspondence between the “outsider” theme and wild animals that are seen to represent an aspect of the artist’s strength and independence. “The Making of a Poet” (125) describes the “restive steer”, a rebellious and excitable figure who is goaded from the herd by the jealous “old bulls”:

The Making of a Poet

In every herd there is some restive steer
Who leaps the cows and heads each hot stampede,
Till the old bulls unite in jealous fear
To hunt him from the pastures where they feed.

Lost in the night he hears the jungles crash
And desperately, lest his courage fail,
Across his hollow flanks with sounding lash
Scourges the heavy whipcord of his tail.

Far from the phalanxes of horns that ward
The sleeping herds he keeps the wolf at bay,
At nightfall by the slinking leopard spooed,
And goaded by the fly-swarm through the day. (125)

His fate is a lonely existence, undefended against “the slinking leopard” by night, and tortured by the “fly swarms” by day. These dangers and discomforts become hallmarks of the courage required for the distinction to be a poet, although in this poem, there appears to be little relief from loneliness and fear. “To a Pet Cobra” adds a different dimension to the same broad theme. In this poem, the comparison between the speaker and the snake relies on their shared education in vicious retaliation:

It was the desert starved us into being,
The hate of men that sharpened us to sting:
Sired by starvation, suckled by neglect,
Hate was the surly tutor of our youth:
I too can hiss the hair of men erect
Because my lips are venomous with truth. (130)

While the excessive claim in the equation between “venom” and “truth” in my view weakens the analogy, when the speaker returns his attention to a less anthropomorphized image of the snake, the metaphor sharpens:

I love to think how men of my dull nation
Might spurn your sleep with inadvertent heel
To kindle up the lithe retaliation
And caper to the slash of sudden steel. (130)

The words “kindle” and “caper” modify the violence of “retaliation” and “slash” with a sense of warmth and playfulness, which anticipates the poet’s own playful yet vicious satirical attack on his “dull nation” in *The Wayzgoose*. The apparent tension in the poem between the satirical and the heroic, resolves into a manifesto of sorts:

There is no sea so wide, no waste so steril
But holds a rapture for the sons of strife:
There shines upon the topmost peak of peril
A throne for spirits that abound in life:
There is no joy like theirs who fight alone,
Whom lust or gluttony have never tied,
Who in their purity have built a throne,
And in their solitude a tower of pride. (130,131)

This poem, however, along with “The Making of a Poet” seems a groping attempt to find a suitable metaphor to sketch the theme of the poet redeemed by suffering and isolation. The point here is unsupported by compelling imagery, and his final attempt to use the snake as a figure for the transformative verbal violence of the poet is not entirely convincing:

I wish my life, O suave and silent sphinx,
Might flow like yours in some such strenuous line,
My days the scales, my years the bony links,
The chain the length of its resilient spine:
And when at last the moment comes to strike,
Such venom give my hilted fangs the power,
Like drilling roots the dirty soil that spike,
To sting these rotted wastes into a flower. (131)

The sinuous description of the snake’s body evokes a patient existence, in which the full force of a subtly powerful but languid animal (snake or poet) will be held back until the climactic moment. This image of apparent lethargy which is in fact a storing up of violent energy recurs in the poems which explore the quasi-political force of suppressed resentment, namely “The Zulu Girl” and “The Serf”, as well as in “Tristan da Cunha” and “Rounding the Cape”. But once again the comparison of the poet’s words to the snake’s “hilted fangs” seems a little forced, and the idea of a snake-bite wound as a “flower” in a wasted desert, perhaps gratuitously disturbing.

In these animal poems, Campbell seeks a suitably emblematic beast to represent the poet’s notion of his role as commentator, agitator and iconoclast in the context of his “dull

nation”.¹⁴⁵ This explicit analogy gives way to a more allegorical version of the theme in the most famous and successful of his poems in this vein, the much-anthologized “Horses on the Camargue”. Here the analogy between speaker and animal subject is not explicitly made, and the result is simpler, more directly envisioned imagery, with a set of moral claims more specific to the livelihoods of the horses themselves, and thus more effective:

But when the great gusts rise
And lash their anger on these arid coasts,
When the scared gulls career with mournful cries
And whirl across the waste like driven ghosts:
When hail and fire converge,
The only souls to which they strike no pain
Are the white-crested fillies of the surge
And the white horses of the windy plain. (160)

The poem sustains the windswept imagery throughout, emphasizing the horses’ almost supernatural relationship with the elements, and their consequent ability to thrive in conditions of hardship. Like ghosts, these animal outsiders “haunt the verges of the earth”, feed on the “sea’s salt herbage”, and “rejoice” to feel the convergence of the elements, represented as “their Master’s trident in their side”. The poem’s concluding moral emerges from the vision of the poem as a whole:

Still out of hardship bred,
Spirits of power and beauty and delight
Have ever on such frugal pastures fed
And loved to course with tempests through the night.

The poetic moral is given in allegorical form; it is implicit that such “spirits” could be human as well as animal, and that the poet’s celebration in verse of a life of hardship and elemental joy is analogous to the horses’ headstrong response to the call of their “master”, the sea-god Neptune.

Two further “animal” poems in the collection are worthy of mention. “The Zebras”, one of the better known sonnets, is an experiment in which Campbell applies his Futurist and Vorticist vocabulary to re-enchant the South African veldt. The octave sets a pastoral scene of zebras grazing amongst the flowers, depicted as the steeds of Phoebus’ solar chariot:

From the dark woods that breathe of fallen showers,
Harnessed with level rays in golden reins,

¹⁴⁵ Campbell’s critiques of South African politics and culture in *Voorslag* and *The Wayzgoose* are discussed in chapter 2:59-72.

The zebras draw the dawn across the plains
Wading knee-deep among the scarlet flowers.
The sunlight, zithering their flanks with fire,
Flashes between the shadows as they pass
Barred with electric tremors through the grass
Like wind along the gold strings of a lyre. (148)

The “electric tremors” introduce a shockingly mechanical element to this garden scene. The active mechanical energy is embodied in the stallion who “wheels his flight” around the herds, as an “Engine of beauty volted with delight” (148). His forceful activity in the sestet, which culminates in the aggressively masculine final line, “To roll his mare among the trampled lilies”, contrasts in striking ways to the opening mythical depiction of the zebras as placidly beautiful, but cosmically domesticated and “harnessed” to the sun’s chariot.

It seems the place here to mention “The Sisters”, which touches on some parallels themes to “The Zebras”, but ends rather than begins with the girls’ encounter with the dawn. The poem tells of two sisters, “Bored with the foolish things that girls must dream/Because their beds are empty of delight”, who strip, and call their horses from the night to ride naked and bareback into “the sleeping cove”. The description of their “stealthy prowling hands” in the manes of the horses which are “stronger than curbs”, and which in slow caresses rove”, develops the erotic theme of the poem, along with the description of the sweet “sting” of the frost, “As intimate as love, as cold as death”. The closing stanza of this poem is especially beautiful, reversing the progress of “The Zebras” in as much as it stills the restless physical action of the poem into a contemplative, if still visceral, experience:

Through the crisp manes their stealthy prowling hands,
Stronger than curbs, in slow caresses rove,
They gallop down across the milk-white sands
And wade far out into the sleeping cove.

The frost stings sweetly with a burning kiss
As intimate as love, as cold as death:
Their lips, whereon delicious tremors hiss,
Fume with the ghostly pollen of their breath.

Far out on the grey silence of the flood
They watch the dawn in smouldering gyres expand
Beyond them: and the day burns through their blood
Like a white candle through a shuttered hand. (152)

Although this poem does not belong to the “animal emblem” group, it develops the sensuality of “The Zebras” along more subtle lines. Perhaps because the subjects are female, the

eroticism is less triumphal, but equally reflects the Campbellian interest in vitalist correspondences – here between human sensuality, the force of the horses, and the life-giving powers of the sun.

Campbell's poem "The Albatross" is developed from Charles Baudelaire's short poem of the same title, which Campbell was to translate along with the entire volume of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1952. In Baudelaire's poem, the "airy king", the albatross, grounded by a ship's crew for their entertainment, appears pathetic and absurd. The final stanza of the poem draws the analogy between the poet and the bird, who has been crippled by the loss of his medium, and whose most magnificent assets, the "great wings of the giant", become a handicap and an object of ridicule when ripped from their natural element. In Campbell's translation, the poem is as follows:

The Albatross

Sometimes for sport the men of loafing crews
Snare the great albatrosses of the deep,
The indolent companions of their cruise
As through the bitter vastitudes they sweep.

Scarce have they fished aboard these airy kings
When helpless on such unaccustomed floors,
They piteously droop their huge white wings
And trail them at their sides like drifting oars.

How comical, how ugly, and how meek
Appears this soarer of celestial snows!
One, with his pipe, teases the golden beak,
One, limping, mocks the cripple as he goes.

The Poet, like this monarch of the clouds,
Despising archers, rides the storm elate.
But, stranded on the earth to jeering crowds,
The great wings of the giant baulk his gait. (*CW II*, 1985:66)

In Campbell's own poem, "The Albatross", the moral comparison between injured king and poet is almost entirely eroded. Instead, the poem is a meditation on an experiential world alien and remote from human definitions and meanings. In my view, it develops the narrow theme of "exile" into a more profound and wide-ranging meditation on otherness, in which the bird-speaker experiences the globe as a Renaissance sailor might, as an unraveling of an unknown, partially mapped, and seemingly boundless space. But a sense of the emerging experiences of aerial exploration in the early twentieth century is also superimposed on this

eternal explorer's sensibility, marked by a mythical geography, and an abandonment of self to the unknown. Thus the albatross becomes emblematic of the condition of permanent homelessness throughout the ages, associated with a willing abandonment to the unknown and unexplored world.

The bird's strength, like that of all travellers, is in harnessing the elements to its purpose. The opening lines describe its wings as stretched in "strenuous repose", an oxymoron which links the albatross to Campbell's other emblematic animals. Like the snake, the albatross is languid and relaxed, making no overt effort to strive, and yet has inborn speed and agility at his disposal. The outsider theme is touched on in the lines which celebrate his "homeless wings", which distinguish him from the ordinary birds left behind "roosting warm in their own dung". Moreover there is a sense here that physical suffering, and the willingness to endure, and witness, experience, is the essence of the prophetic powers, or the "truth-of-sight" of the bird. It is knocked from its flight by the spars of a passing ship:

I read my doom in those great shattered ribs
Nor with vague fancies drugged my truth-of-sight,
I knew the stars for momentary squibs
In the perpetual horror of the night: (134)

If there is a hidden moral analogy between the poet and the bird, it is both more elemental and less overtly anti-social than some of Campbell's other works in this vein. The injured bird descends:

Flapping the water like a sodden flag,
No more to rise, shot down by stormy guns,
How shamefully these great sprained sinews drag
That bracketed my purpose with the sun's... (132)

By contrast to Baudelaire's poem, the "shame" here is simply that of failing powers, rather than humiliation by the small-minded jeering crew, who are jealous of the kingly magnificence of the bird. This suggestion of elemental and existential joy is bolstered by the striking image of the bird's "sinews" bracketing his "purpose with the sun's". While this image anticipates the Mithraic sun symbolism of Campbell's later poetic volumes, here it suggests the framing of sunlight by the bird's curved wing span to the viewer from below. The shadowy transit of the mortal bird throws the monumental sun into relief in an image which celebrates the relationship between the elemental sublime and the ephemeral life of the artist/athlete who bears witness to it.

The equation between artist and animal-athlete here, however, is not explicit. The bird's first-person speaking voice enables a partial release from the overt moral comparison between poet and animal, and foregrounds instead the engagement with point of view. The albatross, famed for sleeping on the wing, and for cruising without roosting for months on end, has an aerial perspective on the globe which turns beneath him, leaving a trail of passing images of nameless places, and a sense of an ordinary world, seen from above, turned upside down:

The broad curve of the west, with nightward tilt,
Wheeled down, and nations stood upon their crowns:
Each tower a crutch, each chimney-stack a stilt,
Across the nether sky, their fog-red towns

Went striding - while up far opposing seas
I by earth's sunward wheel was steeply borne
To see the green foam-heaved antipodes
Capsize their thousand islands on the morn. (132,133)

The imagery here conjures up the atmospheric distortions of angle and distance in the geodesic space of flight. With this comes a sense of disorientation and confusion, reminiscent of the "drunken boat" experience in *The Flaming Terrapin*. The bird's ability to experience and record this confusing beauty is represented as an aspect of his heroism. One might argue that his role is as a global "flâneur" of sorts for he has a vision of the changing, passing world that decks it with meaning:

Broidering earth's senseless matter with my sight,
Weaving my life around it like a robe,
Onward I draw my silken clues of flight,
Spooled by the wheeling glories of the globe.

The globe, revolving like a vast cocoon,
Unwound its threading leagues at my desire:
With burning stitches by the sun and moon
My life was woven like a shawl of fire. (135)

The sustained metaphor at work here has echoes of Baudelaire, in its equation between the bird's experience and the ephemera of fashioning a garment; and the contrast between such ephemera and the permanent forces of the "sun and moon". The reference to "senseless matter" made aware and creative by the bird's "sight" is reminiscent of John Davidson's notion of man (or animal-speaker) as "matter made conscious" as described in chapter 3 in relation to *The Flaming Terrapin*.

There is a sense here that the world's beauty exists for the bird's enjoyment, unwinding "its threading leagues at my desire". At the same time, the viewer/ voyager must both suffer the forces that are at work, and strive through them:

From bow-bent wings I shot my white resilience
Grazing the tempest like a shaft of light,
Till with the sunrise, shivering into trillions
Of winged fish, I saw the wave ignite.

Through calms that seemed the swoon of all the gales,
On snowy frills that softest winds had spun,
I floated like a seed with silken sails
Out of the sleepy thistle of the sun. (134)

The imagery is both active and passive, abject and assertive – the albatross is a "mighty king", as he is in Baudelaire's poem, with wings that are "bow-bent", and like "scythes" that can raze the world in their path:

Swerved like a thin blue scythe, and smoothly reaping
Their mushroom minarets and toadstool towers,
My speed had set the steel horizon sweeping
And razed the Indies like a field of flowers: (132)

But equally he is passively subject to the larger forces of the elements, like "a seed with silken sails" guided by the wind. As his task is to record his violation by these forces in full consciousness, as well as his triumphant epic voyage, this can be read as a poem as much about death as it is about flight, which both the poet and the albatross can contemplate from their perspective of sensual aliveness, and vulnerable exclusion from the safe spaces of "home". Thus the final stanza is one of a Keatsian reconciliation with death, in which the albatross speaker embraces an oceanic unity with the world of which he has been the witness and recorder:

No more to rise, the last sun bombs the deep
And strews my shattered senses with its light –
My spirit knows the silence it must keep
And with the ocean hankers for the night. (135)

The reference to the "shattered senses" in this poem is in keeping with the thematic interest in redemptive suffering in the more overtly "heroic" poems in the *Adamastor* collection. The bird-speaker's epiphanic vision of the globe must die with him, and his spirit will be "silenced" with the ocean and the night, the infinite time and space that his voyage tracks.

Without wanting to overstate the case, I suggest that “The Albatross” is a significant poem in this volume. Like “Horses on the Camargue”, it mediates the outsider theme through an allegory of ideas (Abrams, 1971:4) rather than through the direct analogy drawn in other poems between animal and poet. The doctrine communicated bears the residue of both Nietzschean and Baudelairean ideas – the albatross-speaker celebrates the brevity and intensity of his own experience, and its necessary termination in the death of the senses. The poem draws its imagery from a body of modernist awareness and speculation about time and space, and the temporal engagements of human consciousness with this knowledge. More than this, it seems to yoke together the early Renaissance sense of global exploration – one fraught with danger and mystery, but also potential mastery, and knowledge – with contemporary modernist interests in the experience of flight. Finally, it is a poem that parts ways from the sometimes self-pitying tone of the poems which explicitly depict the poet as an “outsider”, and squarely faces both the experiential rewards and mortal dangers of the albatross’s single and singular way of life.

Warrior-hero poems: “Hjalmar” and “Mazeppa”

Two further poems in this collection rework nineteenth century poetic versions of the Romantic myth of specifically masculine redemptive suffering. Thematically, both these poems share an interest in the suffering of beautiful young men at the hands of old, (implicitly jealous) ones; hence through allegory they invoke the critical mood of young artists of post- World War I Europe. “Hjalmar” is a love poem, set in the context of the “fatal harvest” following a bloody battle, and invested with Campbell’s characteristic southern African geography and bestiary. In it, the hero Hjalmar, who has survived a little longer than the rest, briefly addresses himself to the scavenging animals which emerge with the night:

In the grey twilight when the newly-dead
Collect those brindled scavengers of night
Whose bloodshot eyes must candle them to bed. (108)

The scene is built on an element of the Swedish legend about Hjalmar, a servant of the king, in love with princess Ingeborg. In the legend, Hjalmar is a great warrior who never lost a battle until he was challenged by the berserker, Hjorvard, for the hand of his beloved. Together with his Norwegian blood-brother, Orvar-Odd, Hjalmar destroyed the twelve beserker brothers, but was himself fatally wounded by the magical sword Tyrting. The story

of the dying Hjalmar sending his heart with a raven to his sweetheart is recounted in “Le Coeur de Hjalmar” by the Parnassian poet Leconte de Lisle. Tony Voss explains:

In Leconte de Lisle’s poem Hjalmar, dying on the field of a cataclysmic battle, sends his heart with the raven to his beloved, the daughter of the giant Ylmer, as he looks forward to joining the gods:

Jeune, brave, riant, libre et sans fletrissures,

Je vais m’asseoir parmi les Dieux, dans le soleil!

Young, brave, laughing, free and without blemish

I go to take my seat among the Gods, in the sun! (Poemes Choisis 45) (Voss, 2001:20)

This redemptive ending in the original points to the sun-mysticism that is central to Campbell’s subsequent volumes of poetry, particularly *Mithraic Emblems*, and which has strong roots in nineteenth century revisions of solar myths.¹⁴⁶ These concluding lines classically situate Apollonian youthful male beauty on a “seat among the Gods, in the sun”; a redemptive myth which is also explored in Campbell’s representation of Mazeppa, and in his later location of the torero and the cowboy within Mithraic myth. However Leconte de Lisle’s poem, as Tony Voss points out (2001:20, 21), is altered by Campbell in accordance with post-World War I feeling, reminiscent of Yeats’ “An Irish Airman Foresees his Death”. Hjalmar tells the bird commissioned to carry his heart to his beloved to:

‘Tell her I fought as blindly as the rest,
That none of them had wronged me whom I killed,
And she may seek within some other breast
The promise that I leave her unfulfilled.

‘I should have been too tired for love or mirth
Stung as I am, and sickened by the truth –
Old men have hunted beauty from the earth
Over the broken bodies of our youth!’ (109)

The anger towards “old men”, and the association of young men with “beauty” echoes the imagery of *The Flaming Terrapin* with its insistence on dazzling and spectacular male action. It also echoes the poetic accounts by Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen of the absurdity of wreaking death on young men in war-time who would, in other circumstances, be friends and companions to the speaker-hero. Campbell has transposed a South African vulture, one of the “creatures that grow fat on beauty’s wreck” for the Raven of the original myth, who is also

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, J.B. Bullen’s edition, *The Sun is God: Painting, Literature and Mythology in the Nineteenth Century* (1989), which contains a number of interesting essays on nineteenth century revisions of Sun-myths, particularly associated with Apollo. Turner, Ruskin, Shelley, Swinburne and other influential Romantic and Victorian figures all engaged with this myth in detail, and in ways that reflected the mood of their day.

the sinister and callous “messenger” in the Mithraic schema. The vultures are described as vile and murderous in an image which highlights the contrast between the beauty of the fallen youths and the hideous creatures that feed on their destruction: “And like a shrivelled arm each raw, red neck/ Lifted the rusty dagger of its bill”. While “Hialmar” speaks to the theme of male suffering, it undermines the redemptive myth to an extent as the bleak vision is more in keeping with the anti-war poets of the First World War.

However, the vision of redemptive masculine suffering is revived in the poem “Mazeppa”. The poem, like its precursor poems of the same name by Lord Byron and Victor Hugo, is based on the legend about an upstart servant in the court of a Polish king, who is strapped naked to the back of a wild Tartar horse “for an indiscretion with the young wife of an old nobleman” (Voss, 2001:21). After a terrifying, body-wracking gallop that lasts four days, the horse dies, and the hero is rescued by a maiden, who restores him to life to become the Hetman of the Ukraine. Tony Voss shows the range of contexts which converge in Campbell’s version of the poem, and which serve to develop his notion of the “equestrian nation” in relation to both European and South African myth and legend:

The poem is an early expression of the allegiance which Campbell claimed, along with Boers, Red Indians, cowboys and Cossacks, to the brotherhood he called the ‘equestrian nation’ (CW 3: 382). But the poem could equally be said to identify him with a tradition of South African English verse springing from Pringle’s ‘Afar in the Desert’, another poem which opens with a ride into the waste and closes in proximity to the divine. These mythopoeic equestrian figures emerge from a procession of more mundane riders who trot through the poetry of pastoral and early industrial South Africa. These horsemen are generated by a consciousness, as Victor Hopwood describes the Canadian, ‘born literate and historical’, which has no direct link to ritual and myth, but seeks to create the ‘proto-forms’ of its foundation literature from the heroic enlargement of pioneer figures (Hopwood 19). (Voss, 2001:24)

Voss elaborates on this process with reference to a range of South African instances of equestrian heroism, notably the famous ride of Dick King from Durban to Grahamstown to bring reinforcements in securing the Republic of Natalia for Britain from republican settlers. The legend had been recounted numerous times in poetry, and the historical fact that King set out from a refuge aboard a ship named “The Mazeppa” gave Campbell ample occasion to overlay local legend with nineteenth century poetic mythology. Voss argues:

In his ‘Mazeppa’, then, Roy Campbell transmutes the energy of nostalgic colonial historiography even as he aligns himself with the alternative French symbolist poetic tradition. Into his version of Hugo’s metaphor of Mazeppa as the isolated genius, Campbell projects himself. If King’s ride and the voyage of the Mazeppa saved Natal

for civilisation, Campbell in his putative rebellion against his provincial upbringing claimed that heroic role for himself. (Voss, 2001:28)

Voss argues that Campbell's use of the myth is indebted to Hugo's rather than Byron's version. As he writes: "For Byron the legendary transgressor becomes an embodiment of Romantic commitment and passion, of the fusion of human and natural in the figure of the rider. From Byron's poem Hugo transmutes a single symbol, the genius..." (2001:21).

In Campbell's version of the poem, the Polish legend and Ukrainian historical background are virtually unmentioned. The action begins in medias res, with Mazeppa "Helpless, condemned, yet still for mercy croaking/Like a trussed rooster swinging by the claws" and lashed to "a thing of thunder - /A tameless brute, with hate and terror smoking." Much of the poem recounts the sickening experience of agonised time: "on they flew:/The blood ran thumping down into his brain". Like the albatross struck from the sky, the world for Mazeppa is unstable and reeling:

To him the earth and sky were drunken things -
Bucked from his senses, jolted to and fro,
He only saw them reeling hugely past,
As sees a sailor soaring at the mast,
Who retches as his sickening orbit swings
The sea above him and the sky below. (110)

When the horse finally dies beneath him, the "great black wings" of gathering ravens descend, and Mazeppa, a "shapeless bundle" crawls away from its body. This is the moment of the redemptive turn, when the narrator asks:

Who'd give a penny for that strip of leather?
Go, set him flapping in a field of wheat,
Or take him as a pull-through for your gun,
Or hang him up to kipper in the sun,
Or leave him here, a strop to hone the weather
And whet the edges of the wind and sleet.

Who on that brow foresees the gems aglow?
Who, in that shrivelled hand, the sword that swings
Wide as a moonbeam through the farthest regions, ... (CWI, 1985:111)

Without mention of any legendary details, the poem remains absolutely focused on the shift between the hero's abasement and near-destruction, and the heightening of his triumph through suffering:

And so it is whenever some new god,
Boastful, and young, and avid of renown,
Would make his presence known upon the earth –
Choosing some wretch from those of mortal birth,
He takes his body like a helpless clod
And on the croup of genius straps it down.

[...]

Out of his pain, perhaps, some god-like thing
Is born. A god has touched him, though with whips:
We only know that, hooted from our walls,
He hurtles on his way, he reels, he falls
And staggers up to find himself a king
With truth a silver trumpet at his lips. (112)

Here the centaur image of man strapped to horse represents the (violent) embodiment of genius. This “genius” is evident in Mazeppa’s ultimate triumphant “kingship”, but is intended allegorically to represent the poet’s powers of prophecy and vision – “truth” – rather than an earthly notion of leadership.

Worker poems: “The Serf”, “The Zulu Girl”

The two best known short lyrics of the *Adamastor* collection, “The Serf” and “The Zulu Girl”, together with “Rounding the Cape”, are seen to be Campbell’s most overtly “South African” poems. Tony Voss makes the point that in these two lyrics, Campbell “sympathizes (rather than identifies) with the serf and the Zulu woman of his poems; the effect is to isolate the heroic individual from what is essentially a group, perhaps a class identity” (1988:9). This comment points to the continuity between the two poems, and the broad concerns in *Adamastor* with figuring a creative form of social exclusion – at the expense of political identification, as critics have observed. In this section of this chapter I want to pursue Voss’s reading further, and suggest that the isolation of the “heroic individual” he proposes here is in keeping with Campbell’s overall exploration of this theme.

In his account of the context of “The Zulu Girl”, Tony Voss traces the literature that contributes to Campbell’s imagery in this famous short lyric. In the South African tradition, Kingsley Fairbridge’s poem, “The Song-Maker”, and Francis Carey Slater’s “Hoeing Song”, as well as prose accounts in Pringle (*Narrative of a Residence*), Schreiner (*Thoughts on South Africa*) and Plaatjie (*Native Life in South Africa*), all engage with the nature of labour in the capitalist present, and the ways in which it severs relationships to a communal and agrarian past. Voss points out that Campbell’s interest in labour is both personal and historical, both in

that his return to South Africa represents a quest for meaningful work, and that his critique of white idleness at the expense of black labour is at the heart of his representation of white South African society in the *Wayzgoose*. Voss indicates that there is historical content to this position, however vestigial; he notes Campbell's awareness of the series of worker uprisings in South Africa in the 1920s, and says of "the Serf" that, while this is a pre-industrial figure, "the mode of the poem is expressionist and emblematic, and Campbell's representation of the active working class as rural is an intimation of a fact of history" (1988:3). By this, he has in mind Shula Marks' observation that in South Africa in the 1920s "'workers and peasants' were 'usually the same people'" (in Voss, 1988:3). Thus the "serf" of Campbell's poem can be regarded as a figure contemporary to that of the Zulu girl who works on the plantations of wealthy white landowners; and both figures bear within them an extra-historical triumph, born simply of endurance.

In "The Serf", the "heart" of the ploughman, once moved by the "war-cry" "lies fallow now", through a life of insult. His identification with a contemporary South African black workforce is further established with reference to "the tribal spears". But with the end of war-like rebellion, and his commitment to a "somnambulistic" existence of routine labour, a different triumph follows – that of patience, endurance, and an acceptance of the cycles of history that parallel those of nature:

The Serf

His naked skin clothed in the torrid mist
 That puffs in smoke around the patient hooves,
 The ploughman drives, a slow somnambulist,
 And through the green his crimson furrow grooves
 His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain,
 Long by the rasping share of insult torn,
 Red clod, to which the war-cry once was rain
 And tribal spears the fatal sheaves of corn,
 Lies fallow now. But as the turf divides
 I see in the slow progress of his strides
 Over the toppled clod and falling flowers,
 The timeless, surly patience of the serf
 That moves the nearest to the naked earth
 And ploughs down palaces, and thrones, and towers. (128)

The "surly patience" here is akin to the "sullen dignity" of the "beaten tribes" in "The Zulu Girl", and relates further to the brewing but inexpressible resentment figured by the speaker's

“surly heart” in “Tristan da Cunha”. This semantic chain points to an affective continuity between the brief epic, and the two explicitly South African lyrics. The “isolated heroism” that Voss sees in these figures, as representatives of the violent rupture caused by racist capitalism between individual labourers and their historical community, is extended then to a broader condition that Campbell is attempting to depict – a modernist one of alienation and “exile” which here acquires historical specificity. This, in turn, grounds the melancholic malaise of the speaking voice in a specific (white, colonial, post-feudal) situation. In the poem “The Zulu Girl”, as critics have observed, the maternal body of the Zulu woman is shown to nourish the vengeful and retributive future energies of her male child, particularly in the concluding imagery:

The Zulu Girl

When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder,
Down where the sweating gang its labour plies,
A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder
Unslings her child tormented by the flies.

She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled
By thorn-trees: purpled with the blood of ticks,
While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled,
Prowl through his hair with sharp electric clicks,

His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple,
Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feeds:
Through his frail nerves her own deep languors ripple
Like a broad river sighing through its reeds.

Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes
An old unquenched unmotherable heat –
The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes,
The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Her body looms above him like a hill
Within whose shade a village lies at rest,
Or the first cloud so terrible and still
That bears the coming harvest in its breast. (129)

David Bunn argues that the speaker’s erotic interest in the sensual spectacle of the woman breastfeeding her child acquires a further charge through its association with the violent history of relationships between Europeans and South African indigenes. Against Voss’s reading that the woman has rejected the exploitative labour system in favour of her “reproductive” role, Bunn argues that “the woman’s body is [...] being territorialized”:

In her, we find the coincidence of eugenics and erotics, racial theory and libidinal interest being concentrated in the image of the child's mouth 'plugged by the heavy nipple', providing nutrition yet damming up its anger. Zulu racial essence... and history... is thus transfused, without the mediation of narrative, political organization, or her own consciousness, into the blood of the infant warrior. To the white observer, the pleasure and danger of the black body resides in the fact that it symbolizes release from the tyranny of the Superego, and from the inevitable, interminable process in which the drives are mediated through their displacement into social and political institutions. (Bunn, 1993:48)

While these claims are convincing, it is worth considering further how the poem's erotic charge modifies the masochistic pleasure of the speakers in the two most evident poetic sources for the poem. Both Arthur Rimbaud's "The Louse Catchers" and Charles Baudelaire's "The Giantess" invoke a pleasurable subjection to the ministrations of active, even violent, feminine and quasi-maternal figures.¹⁴⁷ As Tony Voss observes, Rimbaud's poem invokes a soporific sensuality in which the speaker has abandoned himself to the work of the louse catchers. The women's fingers are depicted as instruments of violence – they "glint with silver-pointed nails" and are "terrible with charm". The boy becomes aware of their murderous intention when "He hears their soft electric fingers click/The death of tiny lice with royal nails". The imagery depicting the focused violence of the louse-hunt forms a striking contrast to child's drowsy pleasure at their attentions.

Charles Baudelaire's "La Geante" is perhaps even more relevant as a source, although there has been surprisingly little close analysis of the poem. Here, too, the speaker revels in a passive sensuality, "like a cat at the foot of a giantess". His pleasure is to watch her energetic sporting, and to rest finally in the shade of her breast. In Baudelaire's poem, the male speaker is reduced to a pleasurable, sensual, carefree state of childhood (or to the state of a domestic pet) by the regal physical freedom of the giantess. If there is an underlying sense of threat, this stems from her cat-like indifference, and in the representation of her play as "sport", which could imply that the small lives that shelter in her shadow are equally vulnerable to her whim. As Rowland Smith describes it, "(t)he primitive quality of the giantess is intimately connected to a whole experience of voluptuousness in the lines, and this mood exactly suits Campbell's poem on a totally different subject" (1972:58).

¹⁴⁷ Campbell's translations of "The Louse Catchers" and "The Giantess" are reproduced in Appendix 1.

Smith points to Campbell's subtle reorientation of the sensuality of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, with more "sense of threat than one of delight" associated with "African sensuousness" (1972:57). In Jonathan Crewe's account of "The Zulu Girl", "the figure of the woman disconcertingly expands to fill the entire field of vision becoming, in effect, the ground rather than the figure, thus no longer framed, and unavailable to the controlling gaze" (1997:38). This reading associates the Zulu girl with the Giantess directly, and to an extent works against Bunn's argument in as much as the erotic scene bursts its containing frame and overpowers the speaker's specular control. As Crewe suggests, the image of the woman's body as a looming "hill" or "the first cloud" expands her figure to the point that it breaks the poem's visual frame through its identification with sublime nature. The difference is that where in "La Geante" the (pleasurably) dwarfed figure is the speaker himself, in "The Zulu Girl", the speaker's position is outside the scene, raising questions about his placement and relationship to what he witnesses.

"The Zulu Girl" clearly invokes the erotics of Baudelaire's curious poem, in which the speaker derives repose and sensual pleasure from being protectively dwarfed by the strong, active, potentially threatening maternal body. The key paradox in the poem points to Campbell's skilful reorientation of Baudelaire and Rimbaud's symbolist erotics. The lines "Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes/An old unquenched unsmotherable heat" resurrect former images in Campbell's own poetry of a languid physicality ripe with the potential for violence, retaliation, and the eruptive moments which will come to be named by history. In this way he reformulates the dream world of symbolism to imply that it is within the soporific condition of dreams that history gestates. And that condition is, of course, as much the poet's as it is that of the drowsy child.

While Baudelaire's influence is frequently noted in Campbell's work, I suggest that his effect on Campbell's project of self-making is perhaps underemphasized. Richard Gilman claims that Baudelaire's thematics, following Swinburne's translation of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1862, had an "emotional and melodramatic [...] effect on English sensibility". As he argues:

From then on "advanced" British consciousness, especially the literary side of it, was powerfully affected – though seldom with full comprehension of what it was undergoing – by the movement into hitherto suppressed regions of the psyche and imagination, the aggressive stance against bourgeois proprieties and dogmas and the turning of "negative" subjects into materials for art that had been so largely initiated in France and that had culminated in her so-called Decadence. (Gilman, 1979:114)

Campbell's *Adamastor* poems in particular rely on this "emotional and melodramatic" tone. As I have argued, they progress from self-pity to something closer to melancholia, a condition which Richard Hadlock shows to be characteristic of the figure of the "dandy" in Baudelaire's account. Hadlock argues:

Melancholia seems an especially apposite condition to characterize dandyism. It is, as Freud would later remark, not so much a *complaint* as it is a *plaint*, in the old acception of the word; that is, the affliction associated with melancholia arising from an ineffable feeling of having been wronged... Baudelaire's vision of dandyism ... [illustrates] Freud's contention that melancholia is rooted in "a mental constellation of revolt" (14:248)... [T]he dandy embodies heroism and vanity. And thus, melancholia is itself an *original* stance for the dandy to assume: it points not so much to an aggressiveness toward some unspecified external loss, but rather, to a primal damage to the self; or what Julia Kristeva has called "an unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound, so precocious that no outside agent (subject or agent) can be used as referent" (12). (Hadlock, 2002:58, 59)

What is intriguing in these two lyrics is the naming of a specific historical condition – the implicitly white colonial speaker's awareness of a future pregnant with vengeance for the past – as the "referent" for the thoroughgoing melancholia of the *Adamastor* volume as a whole – the primal, partially pleasurable, and at times erotic – sense of vulnerability, exclusion, and suffering of Campbell's poetic speakers.

Jonathan Crewe reads the figure of the Zulu girl as one of Campbell's "punitive avatars" which will be "remobilized" in the figure of the titan, Adamastor, particularly in the poem "Rounding the Cape". His argument, which I will revisit in relation to the "rock" poems discussed below, is that critics generally underestimate "not the threat but the identificatory, specular potential of the Adamastor figure and its avatars" for Campbell (1997:38). These divergent readings of "The Zulu Girl" and "Rounding the Cape" are partly symptomatic of the instability within the *Adamastor* volume in the relationship between poet, poetic speaker, and the object of poetic contemplation. I suggest that the lack of resolution around these relationships, which contributes to the fascination of the volume, reflects an ambivalence born equally of an early modernist and colonial sensibility – the melancholia of Baudelaire's literary heirs articulated with that of the writers of the South African "literature of dread". It seems to be in transposing a Baudelairean metropolitan suffering sensibility onto his industrializing, conflict-ridden and yet quasi-pastoral colonial world that Campbell achieves this unresolved, and thematically intriguing ambivalence.

The Rock poems

Campbell captures this most strikingly in his two “rock” poems, one of which explicitly exploits the myth of the Southern African titan, Adamastor drawn from Luis de Camões’ *The Lusiads*. Malvern van Wyk Smith notes of this figure that “Adamastor’s very ambivalence has been for many readers his greatest value” (1988:18). He describes “the protean permutations of the Adamastor motif in our literature, from an image of hostile confrontation to be overcome by the European conquistador, to an implicit and growing emblem of resistance to such conquest” (1988:18, 19). In “the Albatross”, “Tristan da Cunha”, and “Rounding the Cape”, Campbell draws the primary epic material of sea-faring narratives into a modernist allegory. In particular, he is aware of the early voyages of Portuguese explorers around the Cape, having, at the suggestion of his benefactor C.J. Sibbett, read Camões’ *The Lusiads* in Mickle’s verse-translation in May 1926 (Alexander, 1982:74).¹⁴⁸ Seafaring narratives, classical, Renaissance and nineteenth century Symbolist versions (notably Rimbaud), become the matrix in which questions of the relationship between the self and society, and between ephemeral sensory experience and eternal mortality are explored.

“Tristan da Cunha” develops the implications of the theme of “surliness” in a striking manner, through a sustained and direct comparison between the isolated, barely inhabited island of the South Atlantic, and the poetic speaker. The speaker describes himself as “Exiled like you (the island) and severed from my race,/By the cold ocean of my own disdain” (150). He acknowledges that he has imposed this exile on himself, and embraces it as a mark of distinction. The word “severed” though, implies that the break is nonetheless violent and painful, even if self-inflicted. The speaker’s “race” could refer to the “race of men” to which he belongs, or it could bear the more specific meaning of the South African English speaking society which Campbell has “disdained” at this point in his career.

“Tristan da Cunha” was written between 5 and 14 August, 1926 (Alexander, 1982:62), during the immediate aftermath of Campbell’s involvement with *Voorslag* magazine, in which it

¹⁴⁸ In his “Introduction” to his recent translation of the text, Landeg White offers an account of the life of the explorer-poet. It is evident from this how easily the themes of his life, and his poem, could be seen to accord with Campbell’s own sense of his ambiguous standing in English literary tradition. Luis de Camões had initially been a courtier of the Queen in Lisbon, but was banished multiple times for some misdemeanour, which Mickle took to be romantic aspirations beyond his station. His “exile” was mitigated on appeal, on the grounds of his valorous performance against the Moors in the straits of Gibraltar, and on other campaigns and expeditions in India and China. However, he was again censured for writing satirical poems about the corrupt Portuguese government in Goa. Campbell would have seen him as a thorn in the side of a corrupt society, and as a necessary outcast from it (White, 1997).

became apparent to him that his wish to bring an avant-garde literary forum to South Africa had failed (see chapter 2).¹⁴⁹ According to Peter Alexander, the poem was originally intended to use the South Pacific island of Kerguelan as its subject, inspired by Henry Kendall's poem "Beyond Kerguelan". Kendall's poem, though, does not introduce any reflections on society or the speaker's relationship to it, but is entirely focused on the desolation of the uninhabited island. Campbell chose Tristan da Cunha as the subject of the poem after receiving a translation by J.R. Gillie of the first two verses of Johannes Kuhlemann's poem "Tristan d'Acunha" from William Plomer (1982:62).¹⁵⁰ Alexander records that "Campbell wrote to Gillie that the translation had stirred his own memories of the island", but in a footnote adds the caution that "it is by no means certain that Campbell had actually seen Tristan da Cunha. Sketches he made to illustrate his poem bear little resemblance to the island itself" (1982:63). It is possible though that he had sailed past the island on a voyage between England and South Africa.

Tristan da Cunha was discovered by a Portuguese explorer in 1506, Tristao da Cunha, annexed by Britain in 1816, and ruled from the Cape Colony in South Africa, which is its nearest continental landmass, 2816 kilometres away. It forms part of the British Overseas Territory, which includes Saint Helena Island (2430 kilometres to the north) and Ascension Island, and is the most remote inhabited archipelago in the world. As an independent and isolated "self", representing in one view an outer margin of the British Empire, and, in another, a place of radical separateness and independence, the island is an effective metaphor for the ambivalent representation of the poetic outsider – a figure of proud autonomy as well as of vulnerable isolation. Campbell's complaints about his social and literary contexts here generate a metaphor that extends to all relationships between margins and centres; a metaphor in which the marginal retains force precisely through its unredeemable isolation. It

¹⁴⁹ The multiple versions and editions of the poem have been carefully analyzed by Andrew van der Vliess (2003). It was first published in South Africa by the Owl Club in 1926, and then in an amended version by *The New Statesman* in 1927, and was then revised again for its inclusion in *Adamastor* in 1930. Van der Vliess notes that this was the most anthologized of Campbell's poems for the two decades following its publication, mentioning at least 13 separate anthologies that reproduced it in this period.

¹⁵⁰ Gillie's comparable lines are:

Behind thee will the cities all grow cold,
 Their locks of flame will fall away and die;
 But as the sea wraps round thee fold on fold,
 Wind from thy hair lifts ashes, passing by,
 Thou, Captain of Aurora, true of old,
 A "Farewell" from the masthead lettest fly.
 Yet will declare itself one sorrow more –
 Not all the seas are thine for sailing o'er. (in Rowland Smith, 1972:237)

represents a radically independent selfhood which will always exceed human definitions and intentions. The poem emphasises the grandiosity of the island's self-based presence, which cannot be reduced to an emblem of another (colonial, for example) identity, nor reformed to keep step with the movements of the world of human history. The speaker proclaims to the island:

Your strength is that you have no hope or fear,
You march before the world without a crown,
The nations call you back, you do not hear,
The cities of the earth grow grey behind you,
You will be there when their great flames go down
And still the morning in the van will find you. (149)

This indifference to the rise and fall of nations is presented as a "strength". At the same time, it is also an image of stubborn, even stupid, endurance for there is no growth and no "knowledge" to be had from the island's "path". The corollary of its independence could be seen as a version of solipsism, an inability to exit its self-enclosed experience. The island reaps "only the bitter knowledge of [its] soul", discovering nothing outside itself, through centuries of journeying:

Your path is but a desert where you reap
Only the bitter knowledge of your soul:
You fish with nets of seaweed in the deep
As fruitlessly as I with nets of rhyme –
Yet forth you stride, yourself the way, the goal,
The surges are your strides, your path is time. (150,151)

The mood of these lines is one of profound ambivalence. There is a sense of admiration and awe at the island's self-enclosed ambitions; and yet they are simultaneously tragic and futile. There are moments when the poem attempts to redeem the sense of existential abandonment in terms which celebrate the self. As in "Hjalmar", and "Mazeppa", the poem crowns its argument with a claim for the redemptive potential of suffering: "Do I not travel through a storm as vast/And rise at times, victorious from the main,/To fly the sunrise at my shattered mast?" (150). The speaker appears in these lines in the guise of a broken boat, resurrected from destruction with the life-giving sun as its flag. This image is a precursor to the sun-symbolism of Mithraism, which becomes the central mythical source for the two subsequent collections of poems. In "Tristan da Cunha", however, this grasping for a redemptive myth appears to fail; the image remains an isolated attempt to snatch a moment of triumph from an overwhelmingly bleak vision of an enclosed selfhood adrift in vast time and space. The only

plausibly redemptive conceit at work in the poem is the analogy between the island and the poetic speaker, which to an extent allays the isolation of each.

The speaker's relationship to the island is as ambiguous as his sense of personal triumph. He identifies with it strongly, but equally suffers a sense of mortal fear of and abjection to its monumental and sublime indifference to human experience. The lonely piece of rock is seen to fly lightly across the vast ages, impervious to ephemeral human struggle:

The years are undulations in your flight
Whose awful motion we can only guess-
Too swift for sense, too terrible for sight,
We only know how fast behind you darken
Our days like lonely beacons of distress:
We know that you stride on and will not harken. (151)

This stanza then presents the characteristic Campbellian problem of identification. Does the speaker identify with the human collective "we", which, like him, suffers under the indifferent looming shadow of Great Time, or with the island itself which marks it? The poem ends with a double take on this question; it asserts the irreparable divide between mortal and elemental life, and yet at the same time recuperates the comparison between the speaker's sense of monumental isolation within human "generations", and the island's condition of being besieged by the surges and rhythms of time:

We shall not meet again; over the wave
Our ways divide, and yours is straight and endless,
But mine is short and crooked to the grave:
Yet what of these dark crowds amid whose flow
I battle like a rock, aloof and friendless,
Are not their generations vague and endless
The waves, the strides, the feet on which I go? (151)

In my view, this poem dramatizes most fully the recurring tension in Campbell's early poetry between self-assertion and abjection – here figured in two ways by the speaker's human mortality, his "short and crooked" path "to the grave", but also by the sense of his own rock-like stability, in the face of the shifting tides of human history. The comparison between the rhythms of poetry and the rhythms of the sea on which the island "sails" in the final line also serves to set up the poem itself as the medium which both supports and hinders the progress of the poet – as do the human "crowds" and their "generations" which perhaps represent history in its more limited and specific guise.

The depiction of the island reveals its relentless self-making, accreting time and space to its own mythic stature in the lines: “forth you stride, yourself the way, the goal,/The surges are your strides, your path is time”. The representation of the island’s relationship to time and geographical space is striking. The sense of movement in these lines belies the paradox, in which the “strides”, the “way”, the “goal” fail to mark progress, but merely assert the island’s enduring presence. In the opening lines of the poem, its stasis is that of an unconscious giant, snoring, asleep after the mighty effort of its own making:

No more as when, so dark an age ago,
You hissed a giant cinder from the ocean,
Around your rocks you furl the shawling snow.
Half sunk in your own darkness, vast and grim,
And round you on the deep with surly motion
Pivot your league-long shadow as you swim.

Why should you haunt me thus but that I know
My surly heart is in your own displayed,
Round whom such leagues in endless circuit flow,
Whose hours in such a gloomy compass run –
A dial with its league-long arm of shade
Slowly revolving to the moon and sun. (149)

This image suggests that the giant can be aroused to action and movement, an idea taken up by the references to his “strides” and his “path” and his “flight”. But, in the same way as the albatross encounters global space, the island’s movement is through infinite time, without the narrative structures of history. Thus the stanza in which the speaker claims direct affinity with the island presents a daunting sense of undifferentiated, even meaningless time. As Crewe notes (1997:38), the reference to his “surly heart” links the speaker here to the subjected figures of the serf and the Zulu girl in their respective poems. This extends the concern with the excluded, biding their time, from a personal and historical, to a purely existential theme. The arrogance of the claim that his “heart”, like the island’s, is the “compass” that measures time and space, and that tracks the empty “leagues” in their circular motion is offset by the agoraphobia of the imagery, with its sense of endless time and space ultimately unmarked by the repetitive revolutions of the “dial”. That the “league-long arm of shade” revolves “to the moon and sun” adds a cosmic third dimension to the two-dimensional sense of navigational direction. The “gloomy compass” of the island’s shadow, and the speaker’s heart, therefore simply throws infinity and futility into relief, rather than marking a course through it.

The poem can be thus be seen to describe an heroic encounter with endless time itself – a speculation on the annihilation of the ego – achieved paradoxically, through resilient, but blind, unconscious, and stubborn self-assertion:

My pride has sunk, like your grey fissured crags,
By its own strength o’ertopped and betrayed:
I, too, have burned the wind with fiery flags,
Who now am but a roost for empty words,
An island of the sea whose only trade
Is in the voyages of its wandering birds.

Plunge forward like a ship to battle hurled,
Slip the long cables of the failing light,
The level rays that moor you to the world:
Sheathed in your armour of eternal frost,
Plunge forward, in the thunder of the fight
To lose yourself as I would fain be lost. (150)

These stanzas purport to stir the island to epic battle, but this injunction is not in the service of a “cause” but rather to deliberately risk loss of “self”; even, perhaps, to bring selfhood into being through such risk. Thus the speaker complains in melancholy terms about being “vanquished” and yet simultaneously calls for both the assertion and annihilation of self in “battle”. The imagery of the island which is simultaneously stubbornly anchored and rock-like, and heroically striding through the ages, seems a strikingly effective metaphor for the poetic self Campbell is in the process of defining. That the speaker sees himself as a “roost for empty words” suggests his profound sense of isolation; “empty words” suggests a loss of discourse, and with it, of a community of speakers. But isolation and endurance are equally celebrated by the poem as the qualities of an antagonistic identity that defies definition, that cannot be understood or interrogated, but will not be dismissed or willed away. In his later figuring of “selfhood” in “Talking Bronco”, Campbell will use the metaphor of the speaker’s “dead selves” as “stepping stones” for an indefinite “I” which occupies and then discards these “selves” as part of its own journey (see the discussion of this image in chapter 1:38). But in this early poem, the more grandiose identification with a monolithic rock, arising apparently rootless out of the ocean, suggests the confusing sense of dislocation of the poet-speaker, and a stubborn, even stupid, insistence on his own gestures as the only centre available to him.

This emblematic image of an unyielding and stubbornly held integrity, defiantly present, but also suffering and excluded, culminates in the image of Adamastor in the iconic poem,

“Rounding the Cape”. It is in this poem that the specifically South African problem of belonging and identification is raised. But as is evident in some of the other significant poems discussed – especially “The Albatross”, and “Tristan da Cunha” – the ambivalence at work in this poem concerns not only a specific political and historical context, but also a general experiment with modernist post-Nietzschean and post-Baudelairean ideas about the relationship between the “self” and the social world.

“Rounding the Cape” draws on the mythologized account of the early voyage of the explorer Vasco da Gama in the Renaissance Portuguese epic poem, *The Lusiads* (1572). Early accounts of South African literary history, such as Stephen Gray’s *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (1979) and JM Coetzee’s *White Writing* (1988), and Malvern Van Wyk Smith’s *Shades of Adamastor: Africa and the Portuguese connection* (1988) explore the centrality of Camões’ epic in shaping future poetic representations of Africa; it is with reference to Camões’ mythical representation of the Cape that Gray explores the literary lineage of “the white man’s creation myth of Africa” (1979:15).¹⁵¹ More recently, David Bunn (1993) has referred to this myth in his discussion of the efforts and failure of South African artists to employ a pastoral vision in describing the South African landscape, with its concomitant ideal of social harmony. Graham Pechey too revisits this myth in exploring “the articulation of the new canon upon the old” (2002:9), as does Jonathan Crewe in his essay on “Specters of Adamastor” (1997).

Camões’ poem invents the Titan figure, Adamastor, as a personification of the rocks and storms of the Cape; and in Campbell’s poem, this figure represents the implacable violence of the Cape of Storms. In *The Lusiads*, da Gama and his crew, drawing near to the Cape, are arrested in their path by a terrifying form, “an immense shape.../ Grotesque and of enormous stature,/With heavy jowls, and an unkempt beard,/Scowling from shrunken, hollow eyes, [...] Its hair grizzled and matted with clay,/Its mouth coal black, teeth yellow with decay” (White, 1997:105). The giant speaks to them, warning that for their hubris in desecrating

¹⁵¹ In his chapter of this title, Gray points out the value of myth in the South African context, “which by its nature is given to crossing cultural and language barriers indiscriminately” and which can, therefore, “link areas of literature which at first sight may appear unconnected” (1979:15). Camões invents the titan to figure the sailors’ experience of rounding the Cape in Canto V. This excerpt has become famous as a founding text in South African literary history, in spite of the fact that it recounts merely one of many obstacles in Da Gama’s Odyssean voyage. Gray notes that this “consciously created myth” thus achieves the link between the South African concerns and the Portuguese renaissance (and, through Camões, to Virgil and Homer). In an early essay on the significance of Camões, John Purves thus refers to his epic as “our [South African’s] portion of the Renaissance” (1979:16).

“nature’s/Secrets and mysteries of the deep” that “Year by year your fleets will meet/Shipwreck, with calamities so combined/That death alone will bring you peace of mind” (1997:105). When da Gama asks him who he is, Adamastor tells them that he had belonged to the pantheon of Titans, but had been punished for desiring Tethys, the wife of Peleus, by being transformed into an immobile “remote promontory”, with his “flesh moulded to hard clay,/My bones compressed to rock;/These limbs you see, and this trunk/Were stretched out over the waters” (White, 1997:109). Adamastor’s banishment, (which is a banishment from community and homeland, from love, and even from his own physical form), becomes an intertextual point of reference for Campbell’s meditations on exile in his poem, and is thus identified in curious ways both with the sailor-speaker in the poem (Vasco da Gama perhaps), and Camões himself.

The editors of the *Collected Works* indicate that the poem was written in 1927, following *Voorslag*, and following Campbell’s first reading of Mickle’s translation of *The Lusiads* in 1926. The speaker of “Rounding the Cape” is a sailor aboard a ship attempting to pass the rocky Cape of Storms, represented by the looming Titan-figure, who “from his marble halls/Threatens the sons of Lusus as of old.” The crew draws into the “shade abysmal” of the “dauntless form”, under the leering grin of the “stark ridges of his broken jaw”. They are aware of his role as gatekeeper of the southern entrance to the African continent, and of his power over them: “Across his back, unheeded, we have broken/Whole forests...” The Titan, too, is “heedless of the blood we’ve spilled”. In the final stanza, the speaker’s fascination for this monstrous figure has the character of a fetish – the sailor-speaker, the hero of classical epic, escapes the physical threat he poses, but cannot remove his transfixed gaze from the moment of terror:

Rounding the Cape

The low sun whitens on the flying squalls,
Against the cliffs the long grey surge is rolled
Where Adamastor from his marble halls
Threatens the sons of Lusus as of old.

Faint on the glare uptowers the dauntless form,
Into whose shade abysmal as we draw,
Down on our decks, from far above the storm,
Grin the stark ridges of his broken jaw.

Across his back, unheeded, we have broken
Whole forests: heedless of the blood we've spilled,
In thunder still his prophecies are spoken,
In silence, by the centuries, fulfilled.

Farewell, terrific shade! though I go free
Still of the powers of darkness art thou Lord:
I watch the phantom sinking in the sea
Of all that I have hated or adored.

The prow glides smoothly on through seas quiescent:
But where the last point sinks into the deep,
The land lies dark beneath the rising crescent,
And Night, the Negro, murmurs in his sleep. (124)

Jeremy Cronin (1984) argues that the poem toys with a vision of colonial history which diverges from dominant racist myths, but fails finally to break from these. With reference to the perspectival shifts, the use of active and passive verbs, and the attendant changes of pronominal forms, he shows a number of “subversions” that appear to undermine the racist imperial consciousness at work. He suggests that the use of passive verbs associated with Adamastor (“In thunder still his prophecies are spoken/In silence by the centuries fulfilled”), notably in stanza three, “subtly undermines” the potency of the titan, making him briefly akin to the “we”, the sailors, passively vulnerable to the power of the Titan (1984:69). His conclusion, however, is that Campbell gestures towards a re-definition of the perceived threat to colonial intruders by indigenes, but this is less a genuine protest against colonial legacies, and more a half-articulated lyric experiment in the emotional responses of the speaking self. Cronin points out that “Campbell does not really explore the emotions of the lyrical-I” (1984:77), nor does he fully embrace and acknowledge his speaker’s ambivalence towards Africa. This point Cronin makes with reference to the disjunctive “or” in the second last line of the poem, pointing out that if the line read “of all that I have hated *and* adored”, the complexity of his emotions would be raised to the status of a paradox, demanding that the reader consider a resolution (1984:76, 77).¹⁵² Cronin’s conclusion is therefore:

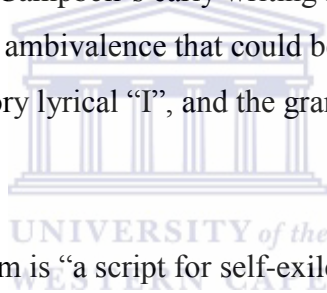
The so-called ‘poetry of dread’, the continued evocation of dark forces stirring away in the night, of the imminent arrival of the ‘barbarians’ – these omnipresent themes and images, which so often pass themselves off as progressive, need to be considered very carefully. Too often some dark, elemental Adamastor is wheeled in as an *ex machina* solution for the white writer’s own personal frustrations with a suburban, ‘philistine’

¹⁵² Jonathan Crewe uses a different edition of the poem in his argument, in which the “or” in this line is indeed the conjunctive “and”.

South Africa, or even as a masochistic purgative for the guilts and ambivalences that the white writer feels in South Africa. To call a plague down upon one's own house is certainly a step forward from the mere bravado and triumphalist assumptions of much racist discourse. But to reduce, in effect, decades of organised resistance by the majority of South Africans against their racial oppression into some primeval (albeit welcomed) cataclysmic force is not really to escape from the broader assumptions of colonialism.

Campbell's 'Rounding the Cape' celebrates an individual 'revolt', which seeks its reasons and justifications in a flirtation with different genres and in a vertiginous play of subversions. This 'revolt' finds its solution in individual flight, and, like so much contemporary white English-language literature in South Africa, a delight in leaving behind it a certain dark threat. (1984:77, 78)

Cronin's comments are appropriate in the context of the re-reading of the South African canon in mid-1980s. More recently, however, Jonathan Crewe has made a stronger claim for the ambivalence expressed within the poem, and for the value of reading it as a repository of "white cultural memory". I would like to consider his reading in some detail, because in my view it accords with the idea that Campbell's early writing is broadly concerned with the nature of "selfhood" in poetry; an ambivalence that could be figured in terms of the contrast between the mobile self-exploratory lyrical "I", and the grandiose and immutable figures of epic.



For Crewe, as for Cronin, the poem is "a script for self-exile (and implicit return to Europe) as emancipation" (1999:83). He links this theme to that of Campbell's translation of Baudelaire's "The Albatross", arguing that this "desire to take flight – one might almost say 'white flight' in this context – succumbs to the tormented self-consciousness and paradoxical immobility of the bird" (1999:82, 83). This, in turn, echoes the immobility of the island in "Tristan da Cunha", and the "forestalled mobility" in "Rounding the Cape" of the speaker's backward gaze, and the titan's own self-entrapment represented by his transformation into rock. In an earlier piece on Campbell, Crewe argues that the Titan represents not only Africa itself, but prefigures Campbell's own self-representation, in its "performances of abjected heroism; the self-consciousness of the antipodal titan 'misread' as an outsize buffoon [...] the terminal (if relentlessly heroized) sense of isolation" (1997:39).¹⁵³ Like Campbell himself,

¹⁵³As he comments:

What has generally been underestimated in readings of Campbell is not the threat but the identificatory, specular potential of the Adamastor figure and its avatars for him. As a self-consciously crippled, humiliated giant, desiring but not desired, stranded at the butt-end of Africa, grotesque rather than heroic, tormentingly displaced from the scene of romance, an object of derision, a confessional truth-teller only when his prophetic bluster is penetrated, Adamastor seems deeply prefigurative of Campbell's situation and career. (1997:38, 39)

Crewe suggests that the speaker of the poem also identifies with the African Titan. The speaker is not only horrified by Adamastor, but fascinated by both the force and powerlessness that Adamastor represents. Through a close reading of imagery of the poem, he thus argues that: “The speaker’s identification with the threatening *power* of these figures as well as his mobilization of them implies not only a fantasy of racial crossing but a prior identification with the immobilized figure of Adamastor. Even the prophetic voice of these poems seems borrowed, with all its liabilities, from Adamastor” (1997:37).

Within the *Adamastor* volume, “Rounding the Cape” appears to be the lyric that crystallizes this set of questions about the speaker’s mythic and historical identity, and relates them most firmly and specifically to the violent colonial history that conditions South African society. As Crewe points out, “relations” themselves are precluded by the mythic nature of the representation, explaining that:

Yet in addition to essentializing blackness – or precisely as the *stake* of this essentializing gambit – the poem implicitly produces a tautological European whiteness. Purified white identity, attached to European memory, remains bound to, and dependent upon, its equally purified “other” – and it remains no less spectral. Insofar as this is the case, the flight from the Cape can indeed go nowhere; at whatever geographical remove he may seek to place himself, the imaginary white man remains bound to the blackness of his own construction. (1999:84)

In his reading of the poem, its terms are not bound only to the poet’s fantasy, but to the broader cultural atmosphere which it expresses. He proposes therefore that its “polarizing construction of race” is valuable in revealing the speaker’s (and the poet’s) complex identifications. Thus the poem “not only opens the way to racial deconstruction but makes the ‘whiteness’ of the historical oppressor, superinduced on both history and cultural memory, a state of self-conscious captivity, contradiction and derealisation. It is thus to a critique of ‘white’ literary history and cultural memory as well as of white racism that Campbell’s poetry now surprisingly lends itself” (1999:84, 85).

Conclusion

Adamastor, as a volume, is redolent with echoes of Baudelaire, the poet of “conflicting urges” (Fairlie, 1960:14). Leo Bersani describes a tension to be found in Baudelaire’s poetry between “the rhythms of mobile fantasy and the rigidity of a self frozen in an obscurantist opposition between God and Satan, between spirit and flesh...” (1977:7). In describing his rewriting of the traditional dualism between flesh and spirit, Bersani quotes Baudelaire’s

comment that: ““There is in every man, at every moment, two simultaneous postulations, one toward God, the other toward Satan. The invocation to God, or spirituality, is a desire to climb higher; Satan’s invocation, or animality, is a delight in descent”” (1977:1). Bersani himself reads these postulations as “an escape from the anxieties produced by the Baudelairean discovery of psychic mobility, of unanchored identity” (1977:2). The double nature of the Baudelairean artist’s experiments with otherness, in Bersani’s description, illuminates Campbell’s work in this volume. He argues that the “penetrable” artist, the artist as prostitute, works in two ways; on the one hand, “his ‘ineffable orgy’ of openness to the world corresponds ... to a narcissistic appropriation of the world. The self is ‘lost’ only to be relocated everywhere”. On the other hand, he is also “shattered... by otherness. He is penetrated, congested, and shaken by the heterogeneity of ‘the spectacle of external life’” (1977:11, 12). It is this “shattering” which constitutes the artist’s sacrifice of his own integrity, his own sense of self. This, in Bersani’s account, constitutes Baudelaire’s version of the saving powers of the artist’s suffering; “Represented in art, conflict and chaos magically become that which saves and directs an otherwise lost humanity” (1977:24).

I suggest that in this volume Campbell draws not only on Baudelaire’s particular lyrics, but on his awareness of the “shattering” effects of perception, and of the redemptive role of the suffering outcast artist. Rather than expressing “great cries of loneliness”, the volume taken as a whole explores reversals and shifts of point of view, which serve to re-align the poetic speaker’s position in a range of interesting ways. The recurring sense of the outsider status of the different poetic speakers cannot be attributed to any single condition. Varying modes and forms of exile seem analogous to the poetic point of view itself, which in its dislocation from community and context enables the speaker, paradoxically, to identify across a series of social, racial and geographical boundaries. The effect is one of a chronic state of ambivalence – the abject speakers express a sense of social or physical vulnerability, while at the same time this is mitigated by a matching confidence in the redemptive potential, for the artist or speaker-figure, of isolation and abasement. At moments, the quest for a creative outsider’s stance is successful – the poems which move beyond the more self-pitying and maudlin versions of this theme lay fair claim to the heroic and creative potential of the outsider’s viewpoint, which is in itself a dizzying and disturbing vision to maintain.

This necessary ambivalence is tested both in the context of the impassable fetishized relationships presented by the colonial situation, but also in the context of the modernist

theme of the double-edged liberation associated with “exile”. Campbell’s contribution here might indeed be to reveal psychic continuities between the urban metropolitan experiences that produced the abject and triumphant Baudelairean artist, and the late colonial ones to which Campbell transposes them. The poems that offer the sharpest vision of this condition – several of the short lyrics, as well as the longer “The Albatross”, “Tristan da Cunha”, and “Rounding the Cape” – are significant in a range of ways. As Crewe has argued, in a post-apartheid context, these texts are liberated to be re-contextualized in ways that reveal the articulation of the modern on the early and pre-modern. Where Crewe’s focus is on the Renaissance intertexts for Campbell’s work, for me the echoes of Nietzsche and Baudelaire perhaps deserve equal weight, for they contribute to a reading of the peculiar blend of hubris and abjection in these poems, certainly an aspect of South African “white cultural memory”, with complex and broad poetic antecedents.

The Nietzschean interest in self-making for Campbell is both the expression of and the panacea for a somewhat Baudelairean form of melancholy – one in which abjection itself is treated as a source of a certain kind of redemptive poetic power. If his most interesting poems on this theme are chronically unresolved, I suggest that this is in itself a point of ongoing interest, living in a world in which the potency of selfhood is equated to its figuration in terms of aggrandizement or abjection, putative power or victimhood. That we should beware of settling too easily on one of these sets of representations is flagged in Campbell’s exploration of the rhetoric of self-making.

Chapter Five: *Flowering Reeds, Mithraic Emblems and the Mediterranean turn*

Mithraic Frieze

In the middle is a bull which a scorpion is about to sting in the belly: a dog also bites it: and a snake undulates at its feet. The bull, stronger than all, has held its own, till a man in a cape, a proud young man, crested with the bonnet of liberty, seizes it by the muzzle and stabs it. Above the dying beast a frightful raven flies. Let him divine the mystery who can.

[Mistral. Transl. R.C. in *CWI*, 1985: 243)

Author's note:

It is well known that many things in the Mithraic religion, even to the signing of the cross on the forehead, were as prophetic of the central and outstanding event in human history as the writings of Isaiah. Mithras has as much right therefore to Christian treatment as almost any other precursor, especially by a cowboy exercising his own profession. Mithras became the vassal of Christ, his cowboy in fact.

The quotation from Mistral refers to the bas relief at the Fontaine de Tourne.

- From Roy Campbell, *Mithraic Emblems* (1936) in *CWI*, 1985, 243, 244)

Introduction

Following the publication of *Adamastor* (1930), Campbell produced three further volumes of poetry in the 1930s: *Flowering Reeds* (1933), *Mithraic Emblems* (1936), and his epic poem on the Spanish Civil War, *Flowering Rifle* (1939). These volumes were deeply influenced by his life in Provence (1928 – 1933) and Spain (1933 – 1936). In *Flowering Reeds*, and in particular in *Mithraic Emblems*, published on either side of his and his family's admission to the Catholic church at Altea in 1934 (Pearce, 2001:163,164), Campbell's poetry is more explicitly martial and spiritual in focus than in his previous volumes. The mythopoetic framework is influenced both by Christian myth, and by his encounters with the remnants of pagan culture that surround him in Provence and Spain. His interest in the modern sport of bullfighting, and in its possible roots in the Roman cult of Mithraism, bring together his love of "action" and physical sport with spiritual and mythical concerns.

Joseph Pearce considers that his interest in a "martial" spirituality offers a masculine form of redemption from the path of abjection so often present in the *Adamastor* poems:

Campbell had become interested in Mithraism in Provence, where the earliest of the sonnets [in *Mithraic Emblems*] were written. Relics of Mithraism, which struggled with Christianity for the hearts and minds of Europeans during the declining centuries of the Roman Empire, are scattered throughout Provence, where Christian churches are often built on the site of previous Mithraic shrines. In many respects, Mithraism, which rated strength and nobility over meekness and humility, was seen as the religion of the soldier, whereas Christianity was the religion of the slave. (Pearce, 2001:158)

In *Mithraic Emblems*, as Pearce implies, certain poems attempt to bridge this divide and to represent Christ as being as much a soldier-hero of action as was Mithras himself. Mithraism appears to be a key founding myth underpinning Campbell's newfound faith.

Also evident in these volumes is a more explicit, if literary, homosociality; in its later manifestations this can be read as redemptive myth in which the heroic outsider finds a community of men who suffer as he does, and are "glorified" by hardship. As Paul Goetsch writes:

In the volumes that followed *Adamastor* Campbell repeatedly takes up the idea that art is a product of suffering and sacrifice. In "Luis de Camões" he regards the Portuguese poet as a comrade who, like him, wrestled "his hardships into forms of beauty" and was "of his sorrows king". In "The Dead Torero" the bullfighter finally has to pay for his art with his life, but his death is glorified as if it were that of a martyr. (Goetsch, 2006: 49, 50)¹⁵⁴

The recurring theme of the creative value of hardship is evident from Campbell's earliest work, but is elaborated in his 1930s volumes, through a range of distinct literary myths which value either male "comradeship" or masculine independence and suffering. In its later military guise, this is represented for Campbell by the figure of the soldier-explorer-poet, Luis de Camões – a myth which gained extra currency when, during the Second World War, Campbell found himself watching for enemy vessels along the same piece of coastline in Africa, north of Mombasa, as Camões himself had done.¹⁵⁵ He expressed his feeling for Camões in the short lyric, published in *Talking Bronco* (1946) referred to above:

¹⁵⁴ "Closely related to the figure of the poet as outsider and victim mastering his fate is the image of the poet as a superior, creative individual and genius. While *Adamastor* introduces a number of poet figures who suffer and are temporarily silenced and ostracized by the crowd, it insists time and again that poets are responsible for their fate: A poet of his own disdain is born

And dares among the rabble to emerge...

Hence, some of Campbell's poet figures display a Nietzschean hatred of the masses (shared by Yeats, Eliot, and other contemporary writers). They worship a 'god superbly stronger' than the 'idols' of the masses and possess insights and knowledge which qualify them as - however unacknowledged – leaders of the masses.

One image of such superiority is that of riding which Campbell associates with 'the idea of aristocracy' in 'Mazeppa', the Camargue poems, and later works on vaqueros. Another symbol of superiority is that of the bullfighter". (Goetsch, 2006: 49, 50)

¹⁵⁵ In an essay published posthumously on "The Poetry of Luiz de Camões" (*London Magazine*, Vol 4, No. 8, August 1957), Campbell tells of how, during his commission in Kenya in World War II, he carried a copy of *The Lusiads* "out east to many of the very places described in *The Lusiads*, such as Mombasa, Melinda, Lama: but the most extraordinary coincidence was to be posted, when unfit for more active service, opposite the very spot where he wrote the most affecting of his *Cancoes*: apparently he was coast-watching for Arab dhows as I was for Jap submarines" (*CW IV*, 1988:479). Campbell states that both he and Camões were coast-watching at Cape Guardafui, a bleak and remote promontory in modern Somalia, across the strait from the Arabian peninsula.

Luis de Camões

Camões, alone, of all the lyric race,
Born in the black aurora of disaster,
Can look a common soldier in the face:
I find a comrade where I sought a master:
For daily, while the stinking crocodiles
Glide from the mangroves on the swampy shore,
He shares my awning on the dhow, he smiles,
And tells me that he lived it all before.
Through fire and shipwreck, pestilence and loss,
Led by the *ignis fatuus* of duty
To a dog's death – yet of his sorrows king –
He shouldered high his voluntary Cross,
Wrestled his hardships into forms of beauty,
And taught his gorgon destinies to sing. (351)

Like Tiresias in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the Portuguese explorer-poet is shown here to have "lived it all before", implying that his once-lived narratives have shaped experience for all time. While Baudelaire's themes and images remain present in some of the love poems of *Flowering Reeds*, the ambivalent Baudelairean tone has changed to some extent, as Campbell moves towards a more settled and firm mythology; one which seems to seek a stronger grounding in the physical experiences associated with, for example, taumachy or exploration.

The "heroic" personae of taurobolic culture, pagan mysteries (especially Mithraic ones), and Christianity, are for Campbell extrovert, emblematic and liberated from the excessive self-consciousness which he sees as characteristic of modernist art and writing. The charismatic expressionism of Campbell's "bullfighting" persona, I hope to show, in as far as it connects with ancient traditions and rituals, heroic or spiritual, furnishes him with an impersonal mode of sorts. Where some Campbell commentators have argued that he became remarkably integrated into Provençal and Spanish life in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and others argue (unsurprisingly) that there was much he misunderstood about his adoptive regions, my concern in this chapter is less with the success of his adoption of Spanish culture than with the way in which he figures "taurine" life, and the poetry associated with it, as a panacea to the modernist "cults" that he lambasted in *The Georgiad* (discussed in chapter 1).

The following discussion will begin by illustrating this claim with reference to his essay, *Taurine Provence* (1932). This will be followed by an analysis of the themes and concerns of

the two volumes under discussion. The chapter will end with a discussion of how Campbell's interest in the "physical" culture of the region brings into focus a particular range of modernist responses to the radical changes of the early twentieth century – notably the First World War. The most significant of these responses for my purposes include the ideal of poetic "impersonality", associated with Eliot and Pound, an opposed literary primitivism associated with D.H. Lawrence, and a rhetoric of "action", which Campbell partly shares with Ernest Hemingway, as an antidote to an obsession with "interiority" in literature. While Hemingway is perhaps the superlative exemplar of a language of action, this chapter will also consider the attraction of British writers to the Spanish Civil War (1936 -1939) as an arena which held the promise of bringing language and poetry back into a close relationship with "life". As I will show later in this chapter, Wyndham Lewis's even-handedly vicious and unromantic ridicule of Mithraic and taurobolic pursuits in his minor novel *Snooty Baronet*, explicitly locates Campbell within a modernist continuum of literary quests for meaningful frameworks (all of which seem to be failures in Lewis's view), and places Campbell specifically in the company of D.H. Lawrence on the one hand, and Ernest Hemingway on the other.

Taurine Provence (1932)

Unlike Lewis, who was his close friend and mentor in the early 1930s, Campbell did indeed wish to "bind himself to a traditional worldview" (Schenker, 1992:16), as is most clearly expressed in *Taurine Provence*. In this essay – part travel literature, part polemical invective against modernity – Campbell's careful observation of people, place and customs digresses at moments into apoplectic railings against contemporary thought and writing. Where the essay remains focussed on its theme, however, it is an almost lyrical account of the traditions of life on the harsh plains of the Crau and the Camargue at the mouth of the Rhône. It offers a striking account of daily encounters with ancient pagan cultures in this region; one which gives mythical significance to his pursuit of a "physical" culture in Provence and Spain:

All round this strange coast one is in touch with the pagan pre-history of Europe. A few hundred yards from the shore of Fos I have sailed over the walls of an ancient Greek colony, from which, diving with the aid of a loaded rope, we have fished up two amphorae. In calm weather the walls are clearly visible a few feet beneath the keel, and we have fished mackerel out of the bedrooms of the priestesses of Venus. (*CW III*, 1988:54).

He describes how the *gitanes* (Provençal gypsies) arrive every year inexplicably at the town of the Holy Maries of the Sea, and then disappear with equal suddenness, "propelled by some

such atavistic memory as that which drives whole flocks of migratory birds, seeking for the lost Atlantis, to fly out over the ocean, *always to the same spot* where they hover about until they perish from exhaustion – a proof that Atlantis is no myth” (1932:54). The image here of a fixed point (“Atlantis” in this case) towards which all movement flows is characteristic of a number of his poems of this period, as later discussion will show.

In the opening account of the pagan history of the region, Campbell introduces his main taurine theme. He describes the modern endurance on the Camargue of the “sacred herds” of Hercules, the same herds which were imported by “the great Caesar” for his taurine games (1932:47). The violent classical history associated with taurine and equestrian sports serves Campbell’s central argument in this essay – namely that the true crisis of modern life is the separation it draws between intellectual and physical human activity; or to put it differently, that the intellect is allowed to coldly dominate the body, and thereby to miss its true animating spirit. The argument is supported by his densely woven account of the relationship between taurine athletes and the poets, writers, and “intellectuals” who recount their glories, and are in turn cited by the toreadors. He recounts a letter by Alphonse Daudet describing a visit to the poet Mistral during a Provençal fête:

Outside the drums are sounding the appeal to the arena and the crowd is following while Mistral reads his poem, ‘Mireille’, the epic of Provençal life, in which the life of the Provençal equestrians, herdsmen and shepherds and fishermen is described as no one else has described such things since Virgil. I have already pointed out the barbarity of the hatred of intellectuals by athletes and vice versa which exists in England and America. In Provence this does not exist, but rather the very contrary, as it did in Greece; the feats of the *gardians*, the prowess of the jousts, and the skill of the equestrians, the valour of the *toreadors*, ornament, ennoble and inspire the grand poems of Mistral, the music of Bizet, and the work of the rest of the Pleiad of modern Provençal poets and writers [...]. Nothing could prove better the splendid alliance that exists between the intellectual and physical athletes of Provence than the fact that the anniversaries of their poets are celebrated by jousts and bullfights. [...] At a Provençal bullfight the ‘Coup Santo’ is sung, and the bond between the literature and the life of the country is made even stronger by the presence of great literary men like Daudet and Maurras who generously respect the splendid physical acts of their countrymen and who are as generously respected by those who perform them. [...] Nobody has better described the taurine fêtes and *ferrades* of Provence than Mistral, but that is not his glory. His chief glory is his Blake-like belief in the human face and the human lineaments; that he has sung classical epics of love, jealousy, hatred and human passion (in the age of Shaw) as he saw them going on around him without any romanticisms, but with a realism and a ‘modernism’ that were neither forced nor consciously exerted; that he created a Mireille in the age of bug-hunting, microbe searching, Ann Veronicas and other frowsy, spectacled nymphs of the microscope and the botany class; that he

still loved and saw human identities while Whitman and Hugo were ‘yawping’ about ‘Humanidad’, ‘Progress’ and ‘Democracy’. (*CW III*, 1988:56, 57)

His themes here are familiar from earlier prose works and satires, but his solution to the “yawping” of modern writers and intellectuals has taken a very clear shape in this essay. Provençal culture does not pit the writer against the man of action, but regards them as mutually dependent and sustaining. For Campbell, his dual images of himself can therefore comfortably co-exist in this environment, where “action” is poetry, and poetry is necessary to “action”. This clarifies his comment in *Broken Record* (1934) that “there is no difference at all, between a verb and an act” (*CW III*, 1988:152). Campbell might have added that there is no difference between a writer and a living, acting human being, in a culture which values all human skill.¹⁵⁶

His gripe against English intellectuals in particular finds fairly full expression in this short book. Here his barbs are aimed at the “SPCA” type of “Anglo-Saxon”:

a kind of man who wears woollen underpants, carries horrible little black umbrellas, is afraid of Germs and objects to almost everything in life, especially to anything that surpasses him in valour or skill... This type is the ancient Nordic Barbarian or Druid breaking free from the chivalry of the Celt, the civilization of the Roman, and the culture of the Greek [...]. This Nordic Goth, Vandal or *Druid* has two disguises, either as the lover of man, or as the lover of animals (his altars are the machine gun, the prison, and the guillotine): his disguises are a strange device for there is no greater hater of human beings than the philanthropist or animal-lover. (*CW III*, 1988:51)

The known and established artistic “truths” of tradition are here set against the shifting forms of modern knowledge, all of which are temporary, fashionable, and directed towards the unworthy and inhumane modern impulses of self-protection and self-consciousness. He argues that these forms of knowledge produce the very malaise which they claim to analyze, and fail to evolve a fully-fledged tradition of understanding:

The most devoted believer in Freud can go mad and often does: the most important invalids are the greatest believers in patent remedies. But scientific and philosophical discoveries only contradict and supersede one another and all unanimously point back to the human myths of antiquity, whereas poetry and tauromachy contribute more and more to their own traditions. [...] We know the history of tauromachy onwards from

¹⁵⁶ Elsewhere in *Broken Record*, Campbell says :

“I am so passionate a spectator of action that I have often found myself taking part in things which do not come in the way of most other poets, and a series of disjointed romantic adventures have been the result, some of which project into my imagination, but for that I can make no excuse as my memory and imagination work as one; by force of recounting them they have assumed more elegant shapes...” (*CW III*, 1988:72). In his descriptions of both “living” and writing in his prose works, Campbell insists on a fluid relationship between action, imagination, and the imaginative “recounting” of action.

Tuesday as clearly as we know that of poetry; and from the beginning of the eighteenth century we know almost every pass, *pic*, or *estocada* that has been performed up to the present day. (*CW III*, 1988:58)

This comment explains partly the enthusiastic return to “the human myths of antiquity” in *Flowering Reeds* and *Mithraic Emblems*, and in particular, the return to Ovid’s legends, as a durable touchstone in an age of fashions. It is against the heroic and epic homage to the grandeur, skill, and valued showiness of the expert athletes that Campbell sets modern life:

When consciousness becomes so shy and self-conscious that it tries to apologize for itself by studying itself in the collective third person, and explaining itself, it ceases to be consciousness. It begins to feed on second-hand experience and exists no longer in the first person. It becomes a spectator and ceases to be active. One’s real existence is not what happens in the looking-glass and it believes the looking-glass every time. It tries to supplant life by its reflection... [I]t is on account of this negative spirit, rather than any economic crisis, that our civilization is crumbling. [...] Aretine, Brantôme, and Rabelais have been superseded by dreary Wesleyans, solemn Jews and pompous Calvinists such as Freud and Ernest Jones, etc., who see no gaiety in the sexual life but only mechanical fatality. (*CW III*, 1988:64)

Thus for Campbell tradition, myth, and their investment in a “physical culture” combine to constitute an alternative path to that of solipsism, self-study and the attendant malaise of early 20th century European – or perhaps specifically English – cultural life. The poets and artists of Provence and Spain are central to this culture, and their work cannot be untangled from the artistry of the bullring itself, which for Campbell has a redemptive and incorruptible honesty and simplicity: “Calvinism and psycho-analysis are the allies of big commerce... Their whole effect has been to try to humiliate every class of humanity by fostering class-wars, colour-wars, age-wars, sex-wars, etc., until the human being has no self left apart from his or her mere utility as a working machine. [...] The only thing in modern life that can and will beat this tendency is the life of equestrians and cattlemen” (*CW III*, 1988:65). True to the cowboy image disseminated in films, Campbell seems to claim here that the manly skill and independence of “equestrians and cattlemen” will protect them and their poets from corruption by capital, and by cheap “fads”.

Provence, Spain and Catholicism

In 1928, the Campbells had settled down to rustic life near Martigues in Provence, first living on a small farm called Tour de Vallier, and later at Figuerolles, a little further distant from the town. In Martigues, they had a community of both literary expatriate friends, and locals.

Campbell made a small income through fishing, and participating in local sports such as water-jousting and bullfighting, and later went into partnership on a boat with a local friend, Marius Polge. Polge, known as “Grandpère” subsequently married Mary’s sister Helen, and thus became Campbell’s brother-in-law. The young Afrikaans poet Uys Krige joined them at Figuerolles as their daughters’ tutor, and struck up a close and lasting friendship with the Campbells. They spent time with Aldous and Maria Huxley, who lived nearby, and were visited regularly by friends from England, particularly Wyndham Lewis and Augustus John.¹⁵⁷

By 1933, Campbell was in serious debt, and when he was held liable for the damages caused by his daughter’s goat to a neighbour’s field of young peach trees, he faced a jail sentence for non-payment. The Campbells escaped the authorities by travelling over the border to Barcelona in Spain in the autumn of 1933 (Pearce, 2001:151). After enduring several months of city existence during times of extreme political turmoil and in a state of serious poverty, they left Barcelona for Valencia. From there, they sought out a village where they could continue the rustic existence they had enjoyed at Martigues, and found Altea, near Alicante, in May 1934. It was there that Mary announced she was going to become a Catholic; to which, reportedly, Roy responded instantly “Well, kid ... if you’re going to, I will too” (Pearce, 2001:163).

The Campbell children, and particularly Tess, were taken aback at this extreme volte-face. They had been raised to denigrate Catholics, and laugh at their superstitious ways, and were accustomed to Campbell calling Catholic priests “black beetles” (2001:164). In his own account, Campbell’s conversion was a response to the ways of life of the Spanish peasant community in which he had chosen to live. He wrote: ““I don’t think that my family and I were converted by any event at any given moment [...] We lived for a time on a small farm in the sierras at Altea where the working people were mostly good Catholics, and there was such a fragrance and freshness in their life, in their bravery, in their reverence, that it took hold of us all imperceptibly”” (Matthew Hoehn, 1948:04, cited in Pearce, 2001:163).

¹⁵⁷ Augustus John had a house in Martigues which he visited regularly, and the Huxleys lived in the village of Sanary sur Mer, about 70 kilometres distant. Sanary had a large population of expatriate German writer who had exiled themselves there from Hitler’s regime in the early 1930s, including Bertolt Brecht and Thomas Mann. Sybille Bedford also lived there with her mother and step-father, having fled Mussolini’s Italy as Germans with some Jewish ancestry. Sybille Bedford became a friend of the Campbells and the Huxleys, the latter helping her out of her “stateless” condition by finding an English friend to marry her and endow her with a passport, and then helping her to leave occupied France for the U.S.A. (Alexander, 1982:110, 111)

This explanation is disarmingly simple, especially in the face of the Campbell daughters' account of the families' early anti-Catholic sentiments. In his biography of Campbell, Joseph Pearce proposes that Campbell's pantheistic symbolism becomes Mithraic emblem, which in turn is transfigured into Christian emblem (2001:159); an argument I will trace in more detail in the analysis of the poems, and which seems broadly apt.¹⁵⁸ He argues further that Campbell thought he had found in Catholicism the "antidote to the 'psychic miasma' which he had sought to confront, somewhat inarticulately, in *Broken Record* (1934) and *The Georgiad* (1931)":

The Church to which he was about to offer his allegiance was very much the Church Militant, waging war on the intellectual modernism which he despised. Until their arrival in Spain, he and Mary had been 'vaguely and vacillatingly Anglo-Catholic ... but now was the time to decide whether ... to remain half-apatetic to the great fight which was obviously approaching – or whether we should step into the front ranks of the Regular Army of Christ'. (Pearce, 2001:161. Campbell quotation from *BR*, 317)

Graham Pechey makes the compelling suggestion that Roy Campbell's affinity for peasant Spain, and its dominant religion, was an extension of established linguistic habits in which his use of English was closely aligned to the Romance languages. This, in turn, Pechey reads as reflecting Campbell's interest in an expressive mode that relates to the sensual and the concrete, rather than the abstract and the philosophical.¹⁵⁹ Thus there is a close correlation between Campbell's expressive habits, his literary and philosophical instincts, and his chosen way of life. In Pechey's account, Campbell's affinity for Romance languages, and the regions

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Pearce sees the refinement of pantheistic themes in these two volumes as indicative of Campbell's emerging Catholicism:

Taken as a whole, *Mithraic Emblems* displays a soul in transit. The earliest sonnets show the poet groping with an uncomprehended and incomprehensible paganism, relishing the irrational, the *obscurum per obscurius* – the obscure by the still more obscure. It is Mithraic 'truth' whispered with masonic secrecy – the affirmation of faith without reason. In the later sonnets, written after Campbell's arrival in Spain, Christianity emerges triumphant, not so much to vanquish Mithraism as to make sense of it. The towering influence of St John of the Cross, the great Spanish poet and mystic who was a friend and ally of St Teresa of Avila, emerges as a herald of divine revelation. (Pearce, 2001: 158)

¹⁵⁹ Pechey's argument emerges from a close reading of Campbell's poem "A Jug of Water" in *Mithraic Emblems*, which reflects the Spanish sensitivity to the source of water, and reverence for its distinctive tastes. From this analysis, Pechey argues:

We might observe here how far Campbell is from that reflex of the typical Anglophone literary sensibility which would tend automatically to link such earliness and elementality [in "A Jug of Water"] with a grammar of (biblical) parataxis and a lexis of the ('Germanic') monosyllable. If anything, Campbell inflects the Germanic-Romance hybrid which is his mother-tongue and poetic medium towards the latter component, thereby effectively refusing to take it for a register of cognition and abstraction counterposed to a more truly native register of ostension and the concrete. This *soi-disant* 'Latin Celt', sworn foe of the 'Saxon', might then be said to have inhabited the Romance countries inwardly and verbally before he encountered them in life and experience; Provence, Spain, and Portugal are therefore less real places than projections into the world of a linguistic habit he had formed in his youth. (Pechey, 2006:66)

which retain a “living” sense of their history relates to an ingrained philosophical stance, which Campbell begins to outline more clearly in his Provençal and Iberian writing, and especially in *Taurine Provence*, and which is associated with a move away from the abstract towards concrete forms of expression. This position can be crudely characterised as opposed to institutional intellectualism; it is directed towards what Campbell would consider a world of lived (meaning, in part, physical) experience, described in a closely related “living” art. In his volumes of the 1930s, the poetic concerns are with an attempt to reconcile the vital, but transient world, to the vast immortal forces of time and space. In Pechey’s view, he does this with recourse to neo-Platonic idealised forms (2006:71).

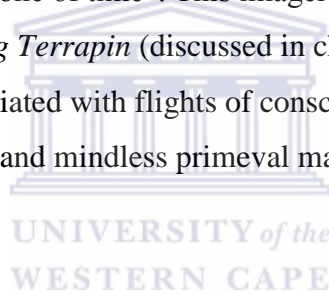
There is a further aspect to this conversion though. Martin Green makes the intriguing observation that conversion to Catholicism was an established resolution to the youth-cult of 1920s dandyism; a cult in which a steadfast refusal to take on the mantle of “manly” maturity, reason and responsibility could be seen as a defining position. He argues that “Catholicism has often been a means whereby dandyism has been reconciled to reality; the repudiation of Protestantism has been a symbolic repudiation of philistinism and ‘squareness,’ and the acceptance of Rome and ritual has made dandyism seem a mode of paradoxical seriousness” (1976:138). This point adds an intriguing further dimension to the established interpretations of Campbell’s conversion to Catholicism.

Flowering Reeds (1933)

The argument of the title lyric of the volume is densely woven, and profoundly pessimistic. In it, the sun-inflamed reed is compared to the light of Tullia’s tomb, referring to the legend that a lamp burned for 1500 years in the tomb of Cicero’s favourite daughter (*CWI*, 1985:643); the image thus contrasts the ephemeral but potent and disruptive presence of light to the deathly vastness of time. The poem in some ways echoes in simplified form the imagery of “Tristan da Cunha”, depicting the waters of the Rhône as “passing leagues of gloom,/Torrential in their strength and speed”. The metaphysical analogy between water and time is conventional, but the surprising conceit of the poem is the notion that this primal movement is “Resisted by a rosy plume” of the reed set aflame by the last rays of sunlight.

This image points to a new direction in Campbell’s poetic concerns. The poem as a whole aims to draw an analogy between the reed’s resistance of the mighty waters of the river, and

the force of poetry itself. The reed, like the man-made light in Tullia's tomb, bears witness to the devastation of time: "The frail wick-tethered phantom set/ To watch, remember and regret" serves the mournful purpose of the candle. It witnesses "The centuries that thundered by/To battle, scooping huge moraines/Across the wreck of fifty reigns"; fragile and immobile as it is, the reed may witness and mourn the macrocosmic realignment of earth and kingdoms by the forces of time. In viewing "how much must pass and die/To set such scatheless phantoms free" the reed, like poetry and art itself, plays some small role in redeeming amorphous time. It becomes the "scatheless phantom" in as much as its watery reflection is immortal; an image which I consider to bring together the timelessness of the reflective powers of "art" with the endurance of the humble, vulnerable and unnoticed. This latter theme runs throughout Campbell's work, starting with the early lyric, "The Serf", and achieves both comic and epic resonance in "Vespers on the Nile", as Graham Pechey has shown in a discussion I will return to later. The reed is further seen to "feather with one reed of rhyme/ The boulder-rolling Rhône of time". This imagery seems further reminiscent of the Davidsonian ideas in *The Flaming Terrapin* (discussed in chapter 2): here the reed, the candle, and poetry itself are associated with flights of consciousness, which emerge from and give expressive shape to the dark and mindless primeval material world.




The Flowering Reed

When the red brands of day consume
 And in the darkening Rhône illumine
 The still reflections of the reed,
 I saw its passing leagues of gloom,
 Torrential in their strength and speed,
 Resisted by a rosy plume
 That burned far down among the weed;
 As in the dark of Tullia's tomb
 The frail wick-tethered phantom set
 To watch, remember and regret,
 Thawing faint tears to feed its fume
 Of incense, spent in one long sigh
 The centuries that thundered by
 To battle, scooping huge moraines
 Across the wreck of fifty reigns;
 It held a candle to the eye
 To show how much must pass and die
 To set such scatheless phantoms free,
 Or feather with one reed of rhyme
 The boulder-rolling Rhône of time,
 That rafts our ruin to the sea. (221)

The poem as a whole appears to be a tribute to the witnessing power of poetry in the macrocosmic scheme of “Great Time”, but one which is more muted and frail than the grandiose metaphor in “Tristan da Cunha” that compares the ageless and “surly” island to the resistant heart of the poet. The figure of the poet-speaker himself in this poem has been eroded entirely.

He re-enters the scene in a number of short love-lyrics in *Flowering Reeds*, which draw on Baudelairean sexual imagery, and which invoke love in pantheistic terms. In “The Shell”, the theme of love appears to be a pretext for an oceanic dream of exotic life. As a love poem it seems to me somewhat unconvincing – the beloved is asleep, “The azure films upon her eyes/Are folded like the wings of terns” and yet “Still in her flesh the Anger glows”. The speaker’s quest for her violent vitality in slumber does not ring true, but the comparison between her closed eyelashes and the wings of sea-birds generates beautiful marine dream-memories in the final lines:

The Shell



The azure films upon her eyes
Are folded like the wings of terns;
But still the wavering tide returns,
And in her hair an ocean sighs:
Still in her flesh the Anger glows
And in her breathing seems to hiss
The phantom of the fiercest kiss
With which we slew its crimson rose –
As in a flushed barbaric shell
Whose lips of coral, sharked with pearls,
Of the remembered surges tell,
A ghostly siren swells the roar
And sings of some deserted shore
Within whose caves the ocean swirls. (225)

The quasi-Symbolist imagery conjures up sea sounds, ocean currents and marine loneliness. As with “The Flowering Reed”, the short metrical pattern of this sonnet supports the sense of rapid transformations from the particular object of contemplation to the broader, elemental life of river and ocean.

Similarly, in “The Flame”, love itself is compared to the “burnish” of the “blue darkness” of the beloved’s hair; a burnish which he can kindle into a flame, a raven or a great star. Again

while the multiple transformations are interesting, the imagery seems overblown, except in the line reminiscent of the theme of “The Flowering Reed” where the point becomes clear. Love, for the speaker, is “Like a great star with steady beam/It runs against a darkened stream,/And from its onrush of despairs/Draws all the splendours of my blood”. Here the woman’s hair becomes emblematic of a stable force, like the reed, against the rush of time and thus manifests the existential comfort of love.

The Flame

In the blue darkness of your hair,
Smouldering on from birth to death,
My love is like the burnish there
That I can kindle with a breath.
Or like the flame in this black wine
Upon whose raven wings we rise
Lighter in spirit than the sighs
With which the purple roses twine:
Like a great star with steady beam
It runs against a darkened stream,
And from its onrush of despairs
Draws all the splendours of my blood,
As I have seen the Rhône in flood
Drawn starward by the golden hairs. (227)

The “splendours” of the speaker’s “blood” are implicitly comparable to the reflected “rosy plume” of the reed – a transient manifestation of worldly magnificence which congregates around the still point of reed or star that resists the “stream” of time (or here, human “despairs”). The challenge to death and eternity in these poems is more deeply melancholy, but also less “personal” and subjective, than the complaints of the outcast speakers in “Tristan da Cunha”, “Rounding the Cape”, “Mazeppa”, and *The Flaming Terrapin*. The redemptive vision of these poems seems more muted and less directly allied to the rebellious heart of the poetic speaker.

The obsession with the hair of a beloved woman returns throughout the volume. While it clangs at times, in certain poems the image seems to work. In “Wings”, the speaker, “sick of self”, unleashes a “demon” from his own dark and secret mind, through the transformation of his beloved’s hair into a bird of prey, which appears to travel between the lovers and the underworld – a prefiguring of the Mithraic figure of the Raven.

Wings

When gathering vapours climb in storm
The steep sierras of delight,
Wings of your hair I love to form
And on its perfume soar from sight.
For in those great black plumes unfurled
The darkest condor of my thought
May stretch his aching sinews taut
And fling his shadow on the world.
When sick of self my moods rebel,
The demon from his secret hell,
The eagle from his cage of brass,
They have been lent such scented wings
Over the wreck of earthly things
In silence with the sun to pass. (231)

There is an odd juxtaposition between the sentimental lovers' declaration: "Wings of your hair I love to form", and the dramatic underworld figures that the gentle moment releases: "The demon from his secret hell,/The eagle from his cage of brass". The final lines of the poem however evoke the silent world of witness and experience in his earlier poem "The Albatross". The birds of prey here, with their transcendent powers of flight, are identified with the passing of the sun "over the wreck of earthly things". The birds are also figures that mediate between solar transcendence and the poet-speaker himself, for they represent "The darkest condor of my thought". The woman's hair, then, releases the libidinal energy in the speaker which in turn is transformed into the witnessing powers of the poet that soar above the world of quotidian and ephemeral life.

The mistress's hair is a recurrent theme in Baudelaire's "Les Fleurs du Mal", and it seems Campbell is trying here to conjure up the satanic associations with female sexuality in Baudelaire's poems. In this aspect I feel that it fails, perhaps because Campbell simply loves Mary too much, and cannot transform her into the femme fatale of the Baudelairean world (or indeed of some Campbell commentators). The point is that this imagery tries to bring together the eternal power of symbol, with the daemonic energy and force of transformation. In Baudelaire's work, synaesthesia effects these transformations, and Campbell's experience of Provençal and Spanish life and poetry in this period releases this process for him in new ways.

Several of the shorter lyrics in *Flowering Reeds* identify Ovidian metamorphoses in the elemental world of the bleak Provençal landscape, culminating in the famous two long poems which vivify the life and movement of trees; namely “Choosing a Mast” and “The Gum Trees”. Of the sonnets, “The Road to Arles” and “Autumn Plane” are striking meditations on this theme. “Autumn Plane” compares a shedding autumn tree to a “dancer” with a “girl-white body” in “whose red hair the Autumn swirls”, and who will later be named as Brunhilde, the Nordic Valkyrie immolating herself joyfully on the pyre of her lover. The transformations here are not only between tree and girl, but between the sensations of heat and cold, the “Flame of the wintry sun”, and “The furious aurora” which “burns/Against the winter-boding sky” (226). “The Road to Arles” is for me the best of these short sonnets, particularly as it declines to resolve the scenario in the final quatrain but pursues the envisioned fantasy as relentlessly as Diana herself pursues Actaeon:

The Road to Arles

From the cold huntress shorn of any veil
 Bare trees, the target of her silver spite,
 Down the long avenue in staggy flight
 Are hunted by the hungers of the gale:
 Along the cold grey torrent of the sky
 Where branch the fatal trophies of his brows,
 Actaeon, antlered in the wintry boughs,
 Rears to the stars his mastiff-throttled cry.
 Pride has avenging arrows for the eyes
 That strip her beauty silver of disguise,
 And she has dogs before whose pace to flee –
 In front a waste, behind a bended bow,
 And a long race across the stony Crau¹⁶⁰
 Torn in each gust, and slain in every tree. (228)

Ovid’s myth here blends with the vision of “Horses on the Camargue”. Through myth, the sonnet invests the harsh and bleak winterscape with the force of human intention and emotion – Diana’s relentless “spite” and “pride” driving Actaeon, in the form of the hunted stag, into an eternal frieze of death, imaged in a winter tree. The violence of the imagery anticipates that of the Mithraic bull-slaying, but in its narrative seems more natural and alive than the static ritualized efforts at a redemptive Mithraic vision, which is perhaps less familiar to the

¹⁶⁰ “The Crau is a sea of pebbles between which grows a small aromatic plant which is excellent fodder for sheep or cattle. The Crau resembles the African Karoo: it is evidently a dried up lake, or an old bed of the Rhône, and it is the dust swept up from this desert that causes the extraordinary effects in the sky at dawn and twilight, and the mirages in the full blaze of noon, such as brilliant streaming water and sometimes fringes of trees above the skyline” (*CW III*, 1988:62).

modern reader than the Diana story. The stasis here of Actaeon's death, "antlered in the wintry boughs" is posed against the "cold, grey torrent of the sky" and aptly depicts the "slain" landscape left in their wake of the fleet winds which "race across the stony Crau".

The concern with trees culminates in the two penultimate long poems in this volume. Both poems pursue the theme of stasis and movement, and draw on a range of transformations to illustrate this contrast. "Choosing a Mast" is an extended tribute to the "speed" and suppleness of the pine tree that will become the mast for his boat. This transformation is figured by association with nature spirits of Greek myth; the tree is first an "oread", a mountain nymph, but in its stream-like suppleness becomes a "naiad" of the streams, and later a "dryad" of the forest. The comparison with the goddess Diana is manifest in the conclusion to the poem, in which the pine becomes "the archer of the gale", and a "dryad" set "free" by the speaker to "wander where she longs to be". The martial spirit of the poem is evident in the imagery: the pines speak with "legioned voices", the tree is chosen for "the soldier's fare on which she fed", and is compared moreover to the Roman imperial "eagle spirit" for her "eagerness of flight". It is the figure of Diana who combines this heroic energy with the feminine representation of the "slender" and musical pine, valued not only for "the straightness of her spine/But for her songs". In the sixth stanza, the forest is represented as an Aeolian harp, registering the motions of a universal spirit, in an explicit reference to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind":

Under a pine, when summer days were deep,
We loved the most to lie in love or sleep:
And when in long hexameters the west
Rolled his grey surge, the forest for his lyre,
It was the pines that sang us to our rest,
Loud in the wind and fragrant in the fire,
With legioned voices swelling all night long,
From Pelion to Provence, their storm of song. (236)

The movement here, in contrast to Shelley's poem, is of the world itself rather than of the wind alone. Where the pine has stood against this rolling "surge" which moves the globe towards the sunset, and is "to the wind a rooted foe", she will later be liberated to drive the boat with the "guardian mistral", and to transform it into "the feathered arrow of the foam" in the final stanza:

And when to the pasture in the glittering shoals
The guardian mistral drives his thundering foals,
And when like Tartar horsemen racing free

We ride the snorting fillies of the sea,
My pine shall be the archer of the gale
While on the bending willow curves the sail
From whose great bow the long keel shooting home
Shall fly, the feathered arrow of the foam. (236)

As with “Choosing a Mast”, “The Gum Trees” pursues the theme of mobility and stasis. It is perhaps more concerned with the perception of movement in stasis, than with the more literal liberation of the tree that will become a mast. The gum trees reveal “A rapid stillness, anchored flight”, which arrests the attention of the observer: “They snare the eye with clues of speed,/And with the wandering gaze elope”. Their visual impact is amplified by their number:

Out of the bounds at which we stick
To what dimensions are they freed
By such superb arithmetic
To multiply their strength and speed? (237)

The diction and rhetorical question here echoes Blake’s “The Tyger”, invoking human wonder at a creation that appears to exist in another “dimension”. Where the Tyger’s presence raises questions about the nature of a creator who can shape such natural power, the question posed in this poem has to do with the relationship between a limited, rooted existence and the vast “dimensions” of space and time. The poem’s answer appears to be that earthbound life, imaged in the trees, possesses a velocity that effectively challenges the blankness of the vast ages, declaiming that: “Their march is one victorious race/Of immobility with time”. As in *The Flaming Terrapin*, this claim can only be “proven” through the rhetorical power of the imagery, which to my mind is highly effective. For example, the sense of movement achieved through a sort of verbal chiaroscuro in the following stanza is spectacular:

Far down each rapid colonnade
Their paces cut the shadows white,
They step across their pools of shade
With intervals of silver light: (238)

While Campbell’s at times excessive use of the “noble” shades of silver and gold can be off-putting, here the “silver light” achieves the effect of conjuring up stark visual contrasts that imply movement, almost as if it were the effect of a sequence of film frames. The image of the “rapid colonnade” effectively transforms static architectural grandiosity into an impression of flickering motion. The third line, to me, is the high point of this stanza,

showing how the bending of the trees in one direction blends their appearance as if each individual moves into the place of its predecessor.

Throughout the short lyrics of the volume is a concern with the tension between mobility and stasis, transience and eternity – a tension equally evident in the *Adamastor* volume. What is more striking though in these lyrics is their concern with Ovidian forms of metamorphosis, and an almost pantheistic vision of natural, elemental and human transformations.

Transformation is also a theme of the volume *Mithraic Emblems*. Here the sonnet cycle depicting the stages of the bull-slaying ritual shows a sequence of moments within a tableau, which ends with the ultimate emblem of transformation, as Pearce points out, which is Christ himself, imaged as an Albatross, the scapegoat of Coleridge's famous poem. Before turning to this volume, however, a further significant poem in *Flowering Reeds* merits brief discussion, if only for the way in which it does not share the mood of the volume as a whole, and only partly share its themes. "Vespers on the Nile" introduces a carnivalesque and witty note to this otherwise sober collection. The poem appears to develop the theme of the "timeless endurance of the serf", but also introduces a note of the mock-heroic. The poem opens with a verbal presentation of an exotic desert landscape, apparently linked to the biblical theme of exile through "the lamentation of an ancient people":

Vespers on the Nile

When to their roost the sacred ibis file,
Mosquito-thin against the fading West,
And palm-trees, fishing in the crimson Nile,
Dangle their windless effigies of rest,

Scarce to the moon's hushed conquest of the blue
Have waked the wingless warblers of the bogs,
Or to the lunar sabbath staunchly true
The jackals sung their first selenologues,

When through the waste, far-flung as from a steeple
First in low rumours, then in sounding choir,
The lamentation of an ancient people
Sounds from the waters and the sands of fire.

It is only in the final one of the poem's eight stanzas that this lamentation is revealed to be the complaint of the humblest and noisiest of beasts. On first reading the poem, the donkey's

complaint could be mistaken for at least two other emblematic figures of suffering for Campbell. In the fourth stanza, we are told:

The centuries have heard that plaint persist
Since Pharaoh's foreman stood with lifted quirt,
Or swung the bloody sjambok in his fist
To cut the sluggard through his hairy shirt.

In this stanza, the reader imagines that the lament concerns human enslavement first described in "The Serf", as it seems to register objection to "Pharaoh's foreman" who "stood with lifted quirt", and to express "the strain, the Amphionic lyre,/By which were carted Thebes' colossal stones" in stanza five. On the other hand, a reader familiar with the spectral horses of the Camargue of Campbell's poem, whose harsh livelihoods fit them to serve the god Neptune, might equally expect such an elemental figure to be the heroic subject of the poem. We are told:

Still theirs the agony, still theirs the bondage,
Still theirs the toil, their recompense forlorn
To crop the thistles, bite the withered frondage
And rasp the bitter stubble of the corn.

But this lack of sustenance is not the same as the "frugal pastures" of "sea-salt herbage" that feed the "sons of the mistral". Their eternal suffering at the hands of the Pharaoh does not invest the beasts of burden with glamour or heroic magnificence, and it is clearly in mock-heroic mode that their suffering is described:

Still as if Pharaoh's sjambok cut their rumps,
Sick for some Zion of the vast inane,
The effort of a thousand rusty pumps
Wheezes untiring through their shrill refrain.

Where royal suns descending left no stains,
Where forms of power and beauty change and pass,
One epic to eternity remains –
The heehawhallelujahs of the Ass. (233)

The "lamentation" turns out to simply be the sound of badly maintained mechanized equipment. As Graham Pechey shows, the poem then simultaneously exploits and deflates the heroicization of the ordinary, vested in the figure of the donkey. From this poem Pechey draws the dual conclusions:

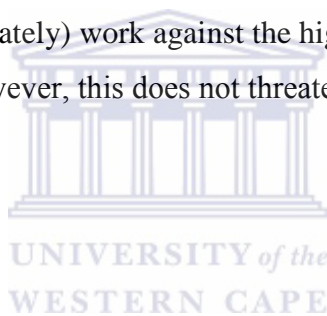
[T]hat carnival ambivalence is achievable in the English lyric, and that Campbell boasted a mode beyond the binary opposition of satire and pure 'lyricism' to which we so often limit him and to which his own division of his work has sometimes seemed to lend authority. It is a mode which is hinted at in one of his earliest poems; for what else

is 'The Theology of Bongwi the Baboon' from *Adamastor* but a miniature exercise in the sacralisation of play? (Pechey, 2006:70)

Pechey's rigorously close reading remains focussed throughout on Campbell's linguistic and philosophical refractions of modernist literary interests. He concludes his discussion of the carnival with the following comments:

Campbell's teasing mock-heroic style challenges the reader to enter along with him this [Lewisian] world of "supernatural laughter" populated by the everlasting types of a life-enhancing vitality. Campbell is a realist in the old, philosophical, Platonic sense of that word. In our 'non-heroic age', the route out of Cartesian enclosure and disenchantment runs through the terrain of carnival. Or, to put it another way: for Campbell's resolutely externalizing and gigantizing imagination it is only by escaping from our modern cave of shadows into daylight that we will come upon the true Forms or Ideas (Pechey, 2006:71).

Humour then, and its association with both bathos and pathos, modifies the epic and heroic themes with which Campbell attempts to exit the contemporary malaise of solipsism. The laughter it produces, may (deliberately) work against the high register that Campbell invokes at times; in Pechey's reading, however, this does not threaten the seriousness of his purpose.¹⁶¹



Mithraic Emblems (1936)

¹⁶¹ "Overtime" is another poem in this volume which shares this mock-heroic tone. The poem is a jaunty if grisly account of the "extra shift" that some of the dead may do on the anatomist's slab. The images of flayed and dissected corpses in the "ponderous tomes" of medical learning present themselves as a "sudden carnival" of "scarlet liveries" which arouse the speaker from the boredom of the "dull texts". The shock of the images is relayed in lighthearted tones that suggest his detached artistic interest in the spectacle. He "marked how well the scalpel's care/Was aided by the painter's tones/To liven with a jaunty air/Their crazy trellises of bones" (239). The earlier poem in this serio-comic mood mentioned by Pechey is from the *Adamastor* volume, and is a reworked piece of Juvenilia:

"The Theology of Bongwi, the Baboon"
This is the wisdom of the Ape
Who yelps beneath the Moon –
'Tis God who made me in His shape
He is a Great Baboon.
'Tis He who tilts the moon askew
And fans the forest trees,
The heavens which are broad and blue
Provide him his trapeze;
He swings with tail divinely bent
Around those azure bars
And munches to his Soul's content
The kernels of the stars;
And when I die, His loving care
Will raise me from the sod
To learn the perfect Mischief there,
The Nimbleness of God. (107)

Mithraic Emblems opens with a cycle of twenty two sonnets on the elements of Mithraic ritual. The first of these, “The Altar”, celebrates the deaths of sacrificial bulls, “whose souls in airy nimbus rolled/deride the deaths to which they kneel”. The bull’s life and death represents, and gives shape and meaning to, the speaker’s own “squandered days”, which, “like flower-fed bulls, are slain” (245). The second sonnet, “The Solar Enemy” clinches the identification between the sacrifice and the speaker’s redemption. The sun is “Enemy of my inward night”; the metaphor established here seems to be a comparison between the effect of light on the introspective human mind, and that of the sword on the body of the bull. The slaughter stands for a penetration that releases the creature from its mortal, self-enclosed form. The solar “enemy” is addressed directly as if it were a matador, clad in “your cape a roaring gale of gold”. The sun is both the maestro of the death thrust, and an image of the redemptive afterlife which awaits both the suffering beast, and the speaker. The sun is described as:

The Solar Enemy

Enemy of my inward night
 and victor of its bestial Signs
 whose arm against the Bull designs
 the red veronicas of light:
 your cape a roaring gale of gold
 in furious auroras swirled,
 the scarlet of its outward fold
 is of a dawn beyond the world -
 a sky of intellectual fire
 through which the stricken beast may view
 its final agony aspire
 to sun the broad Aeolian blue –
 my own lit heart, its rays of fire,
 the seven swords that run it through. (245)



The final image in this poem suggests that the speaker’s “own lit heart” constitutes the deadly “seven swords”, but the “it” through which the swords run could refer to either the beast or the “Aeolian blue”. This ambiguity allows the bull’s death to be identified with the sky as a fellow-victim of the sword-like rays. Death and redemption are thus intimately linked, in the multiple guises of solar light. The divine nature of solar energy is developed in the following poem, “Illumination”, in which the speaker addresses the sun as “O hyacinthal star”. The sun is credited here with generative power, “designing the skeleton... while... like webs of frost against the dawn,/the nerves of joy and pain are spun/fine as the thistled hair of fays...” (246). The sun here confers structure on the world, and generates life. In being described as

“hyacinthal” it is recognizable as associated with the sun-god, Apollo, who is also the god of sports. The legend of Hyakinthos, who was killed by his own discus when the jealous god Zephyr interrupted his sport with Apollo, sets the scene for the later imagery in “Death of the Bull”. As the blood of Hyakinthos is transformed into a flower, named “hyacinth” by Apollo, so the bull’s blood is described as “lily scented” and “flowering through the widening plains”, suggesting the regeneration myth at work.

The “seven swords” are illustrated in the eight poems which follow. “The Seven Swords” explains that each sword is compared to a colour of the rainbow, and the sword itself is an image of solar light:

Of seven hues in white elision,
the radii of your silver gyre,
are the seven swords of vision
that spoked the prophets’ flaming tyre;

The imagery here exploits the fact that the rainbow spectrum, drawn on a colour wheel and spun at speed, produces the “pure” shade of white. The image is of a single sword in a sequence of positions (as if in the drawings of an animated film), because they belong to a single movement, “the radii of your silver gyre”. Here again, the “you” appears to address the sun; and its spectrum of hues is lent not only to the prophet, but also to the poet:

their sistered stridences ignite
the spectrum of the poet’s lyre
whose unison becomes a white
revolving disc of stainless fire (246)

The “sistered stridences” I take to be the muses, and the combined energies of poetry, like those of the swords, also produce a primal and “stainless” light. While this image again establishes transformations between the senses (vision and sound), it seems self-defeating in that it implies that the hallowed nature of poetic expression ultimately reduces it to an impersonal and meaningless (if epiphanic) homogenous shade.

Each of the seven swords described in the subsequent poems named for them, appears to make up its place in the spectrum of human emotion, rather than colour. “The First Sword” (247) is associated with “volted ecstasy”, which in familiar Campbell imagery is linked to beauty, love and anger. Thus the speaker tells us “this sword was tempered in my blood”, as it is the sword of human passions. “The Second Sword” (247) expresses Hesperian melancholy; it is the sword of a “low blue flame ... passing at sunset”. The rhythms of this

poem are lilting, and the imagery of “the soft swell in slumber rolls/ and sways the lanterns on their poles” suggests a drifting, sad, dreaminess. The conclusion of this poem is particularly interesting to me as it links the work of the sword to the theme of the release from “selfhood”. The speaker describes “a lonely bird whose sword of air/ is hilted with the evening star, /has slain upon the shrine of peace/the daily slaving forms I wear.” The “bird” here anticipates the ending of the final poem of the cycle, in which the crucified Christ figure is compared to “an Albatross”. The surprising combination of “peace” with the word “slain” develops the theme of release through death, and explains how this works. It is tempting to speculate that the “daily slaving forms” the speaker “wears” could be associated with the personae of the poet himself and the effort of sustaining them.

“The Third Sword” (248) is described as “sorrowful and pale/and from my vision guards the grail/whose glory I shall never see”. This sword invokes Arthurian legend as a parallel “mystery” cult to that of Mithras, in which the sword is the defender of untold secrets and unknown meanings. This sword reflects our human weaknesses rather than revealing the answers: “it shivers in a land of shade/as if some wandering Cain had seen/his soul reflected in its blade”. Invoking the interminable and elusive quest of the Knight who seeks the grail may explain the sense of tragic futility and stasis in the evocative concluding lines of this poem: “its radius is a flame of cold,/the skyline of an arctic dawn:/Vulcan in forging it grew old/and sorrow froze when it was drawn”.

In a swift transformation of mood, “The Fourth Sword” (248) is depicted with more typically Campbellian verve. It is “a gay daedalion of the day” and it is set to cure the “soured and black despairs/my blasted vine in autumn bears” through its triumphalist magnificence. This is the bullfighting sword, which arrives “horneted with strident wings,/to his own trumpet peal and drum/the toreadoring sylph will come/and anger is the sword he brings”. The image of a “toreadoring sylph”, particularly an angry one, is fantastically unlikely, but enjoyably so. “The Fifth Sword” (249) is associated with grief, and resuscitates the image from “Flowering Reeds” of the “funereal candle set/to burn the fuel of regret”. “The Sixth Sword” (249) and “The Seventh Sword” (250) respectively invoke military and nationalist sentiment and sexual desire. “The Sixth Sword” “salutes the last Crusade”, and seems to refer to the siege of the Alcazar, in its opening depiction of “that Toledo of the brain/where none but perfect steel is wrought”. However, the editors date the poem to 1933, well before the start of the civil

war.¹⁶² It does, however, explicitly value the proud military history of that city, in the comment that the sword is “of the mad West the sole redeemer/and rainbow of the Storms of Steel”; one which reiterates Campbell’s theme of redemptive action. “The Seventh sword” “arms a god’s desire,/who lusts, in Psyche, to possess/his white reluctant pythoness;” All of the “sword” poems abound with transformations of light into heat or cold, and from there into human emotion and action.

The sword poems are followed by three poems depicting “The Raven” in the Mithraic tableau. In “The Raven 1” (250), the scavenging bird of death “fuels” its motion by consuming not only dead flesh, but human joy:

all joys on which our lives are flown
in those great wings of darkness flare –
the blue flame that my lover’s hair
trawls like the moonrise on the Rhone:
the red flame that the circling wine
swivels ...
are fuel that his flight consumes
to burnish those unageing plumes.

“The Raven 2” (251) and “The Raven’s Nest” (251) establish an apocalyptic set of images in which the bird’s nest is a “pyre” made of firewood, “to tempt the forked, cremating fire” (“The Raven 2”) which effects a series of radical transformations from animal to vegetable and vice versa in the second poem:

and all that Burning can restore
of sweated resins, leafing flame,
of whistling tongues and scented air,
to bud with singing hearts, to bear
one crop of nightingales and fruits,
and foliate in plumes and wings
until the verdure flies and sings
and birds are flowering from the roots.

These jubilant metamorphoses are easy to accept, but they open the way for the far more disturbing imagery in “Death of the Bull” (252), where the gruesome image of the fatal wound is rendered through a series of flowery images, linked to the Hyacinth myth, but which serve to make the scene more grotesque:

out of a Wound that never heals

¹⁶² This date is given in footnote 10, on page 643 (*CWI*, 1988:249). Alexander, however, claims that most of the last nine poems of the sequence were written in Toledo, in 1935. As the Campbells first visited, and then moved to the city in that year, this seems likely. (Alexander, 1982:158)

rills forth the lily-scented blood,
the snow-fed wine of scarlet stain,
that widens, flowering through the plains,
and from the Wound its anguish drains -

The “snow-fed wine of scarlet stain” further serves to link the hyacinthal tale to the Christian Eucharist and transubstantiation.

Following the sacrifice of the bull, the next sonnet celebrates the “parasites” which feed off his “mortal ruin”, namely “The Snake, the Scorpion, and the Dog” (252), who are “like courtiers round a fallen king”, who tear at the corpse out of “envy”. In the final six poems of the cycle, the full range of mythic associations emerge, including the most obvious link Campbell is aiming at between pagan, Christian and Mithraic myth, but added to these, somewhat bizarrely, the modern figure of the cowboy. In “The Dawn” (253), the vision of resurrection and renewal is expressed: each drop of the bull’s blood wrung out by the feeding “monsters” “its parent circle shall repeat;/a gem of humming rays, be hung/like dew the rising god to greet,/to turn the ancient valleys young/and bathe His westward-wending feet.” The capital “H” suggests that this “rising god” is a Christian one – but it also seems to be the resurrected god of the Adonis myth, and other reborn gods, as described in Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*.¹⁶³

In “The Morning” (253), Campbell introduces the Spanish mediaeval mystic, San Juan de la Cruz, who, in “San Juan Sings” (254), records all the elements of the speaker’s vision, “the sailing cloud/the Sea that rushes on forever”, and most importantly, “the City White, above the air,/(the City where I long to go)/and the sunbeams playing there”. The “whiteness” of the Apollonian and Mithraic sun-gods, in which all elements of nature, and all the hues of the rainbow are combined, now becomes the “white city” of a Christian heaven. The blending of cultures and belief systems parallels the natural transformations in the poem, as is emphasized by the peculiar inter-lingual rhyme of the English word “truth” and the Spanish “Cruz”:

Such friendship, understanding, truth,
this morning from its Master took
as if San Juan de la Cruz
had written it in his own book

¹⁶³ Peter Alexander notes that Campbell read Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* and Gibbons’ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* again and again throughout his life (1982:261, note 13).

But this imagery takes Campbell away from the “Vaquero” theme, which returns with full force in the final three poems. “The Meeting” presents a tableau familiar in the western genre in which two riders pass one another by in a remote wilderness, and exchange matches, cigarettes, and perhaps a few words. The scene is peculiar cast in sonnet form in this way. It opens with a description of the meeting which implies that the other “Rider” may be Christ, or Mithras himself. The association with the “cocks” of the morning certainly implies the presence of the sun-god:

It is too cheap to say ‘delight’
when speaking of so rare a thing –
I met that Rider on the height
who taught the morning cocks to sing.

The Christian connection is taken further in an even more far-fetched image, in which the simple greeting between two strangers is identified with the “word” (of God, perhaps?) made “visible” (if not made flesh) as cigarette smoke in the mist of a crisp morning. The synaesthesia at work here is meant, I think, to carry with it a sense of the transformation of identities: the speaker’s words are “so mingled” with those of the Rider, that sound and sensation are conflated with sight, as is one rider with another:

To me so humble (best of meetings!)
he spoke – and visible the word!
one wedded nimbus our two greetings
that the frost made be seen as heard.
As our two cigarettes their fumes,
as our two horses snorted plumes,
so mingled were the words we spoke:
sufficed but greeting and good-bye
down from the cheeks of Dawn to stroke
and rosy feathers from the sky. (246)

In the final two poems in which “Mithras Speaks”, this conflation between the ordinary “cowboy” and the god he meets on the rise, is further developed. In “Mithras Speaks 1”, the speaker is reminded that his body is a temporary construction made of the elements, and the god asserts his own superior immortality:

‘A flitting rainbow is your life,
your body but a passing cloud,
remember this when you are proud’

There is a bizarre tension here between equality and hierarchy, for Mithras presents himself as a celestial cowboy, akin to Bellerophon in *The Flaming Terrapin*, but at the same time claims the camaraderie only available to the “ordinary” working man:

(He said) ‘We work for the same Boss/
though you are earth and I a star,
and herdsman both, though my guitar
is strung to strum the world across!’ (255)

However in the final poem, “Mithras Speaks 2”, Mithras denies his own distinction between “earth” and “star”; “star” is simply the ideal form of mortal action, in an image which reaffirms Pechey’s point about Campbell’s investment in a neo-Platonic world of forms:

Sing, Cowboy! string your strong guitar!
For each Vaquero is a star
and Abel’s sons the line will cross,
under the stretched, terrific wings,
the outspread arms (our soaring King’s) –
the man they made an Albatross!

Here again, as in “Death of the Bull”, there is something disturbing about the triumphalist tone applied to the ruined body of Christ. The imagery is meant to redeem Christian myth by transforming it from the “slave” religion of the Romans, into a martial one, identified with, rather than opposed to, the Mithraic. By the same token, the Mithraic myth is invested with a powerful redemptive narrative – although this is not equally convincing throughout. The close and finely traced specificity of the experience of the Albatross in Campbell’s early poem by that name is lacking in this cycle of sonnets. It seems, at times, to be stretching itself too widely to draw together this range of mythologies, and to direct them triumphantly to an image of Christ that is both “muscular” and sorrowfully abject. Presented as a sonnet cycle, the demand for coherence and development of the theme seems too great, and too fragile. Nonetheless, these poems seem to constitute Campbell’s most detailed attempt to articulate the redemptive mythology that he felt was at work in the Mithraic ritual, and to offer a possible explanation as to how its expression as the modern sport of bullfighting had continued to flourish in modern Catholic Spain. It also specifies and describes a range of masculine subject positions in definite terms: god, victim, boss, herdsman, scapegoat.

In exploring the relationship of literary sentimentality to emerging taxonomies of sexuality in the late nineteenth century, Eve Sedgwick considers the homoerotic nature of Friedrich Nietzsche’s writing about men. This, she argues, in its “Whitman-like seductiveness [...]

about the joining of men with men” has been central to “a male-erotic-centered anarchist tradition, extending from Adolf Brand and Benedict Friedländer through Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari” (Sedgwick, 1990:133).¹⁶⁴ Despite his overtly homophobic declarations, in which he vilifies “male effeminacy” in the conventional terms of the day, Nietzsche’s lyrical writings on relationships between men show his investment in this question at another level. Sedgwick argues that “far from explicitly making male same-sex desire coextensive with that of effeminacy, Nietzsche instead associates instance after instance of homoerotic desire, though never named as such, with the precious virility of Dionysiac initiates or of ancient warrior classes” (Sedgwick, 1990:134). Mithraic myth could be seen to offer Campbell a Dionysian warrior cult, one which appears to retain contemporary currency in its manifestation in the modern bullfight as well as in Christian symbolism and ritual. The striking contrasts in these poems between the static elements of (quasi-military) ritual and the energy of transformation would support such a reading. It might also be possible to argue that this “precious virility” of the Dionysian in Campbell’s emerging vision, which joins the spiritual mystery cults to manly fields of action, is the mythical panacea he finds to the “relentless but terminal heroicism” (Crewe, 1997:39) of his earlier poetic speakers.

Modernism and Taurine culture: Campbell, Hemingway, Lawrence, Lewis

I suggest that Campbell’s desire to immerse himself both physically and intellectually in Provençal and Spanish life – and later in the “Poet’s War” in Spain that would start in 1936¹⁶⁵ – should be seen in the context of two other very different, but related, modernist quests; those of Ernest Hemingway and D.H. Lawrence. The differences between these three writers are worth some consideration. As has been argued in chapter 2, Campbell had by the early 1930s, in part under the influence of Wyndham Lewis, evolved a clearly anti-primitivist, anti-Lawrentian position, despite his shared affinities with Lawrence for pagan myth, and the quest for physical and sensual experience.

¹⁶⁴ Speaking of Nietzsche’s circumnavigation of a “totality of male-male desire”, Sedgwick describes how the “old markers for, among other things, same-sex acts and relations; incipient markers for, among other things, same-sex-loving identities – cut in Nietzsche’s writing across and across particular instances or evocations of it. But they do it so repetitiously, so suggestively as to contribute, and precisely *in* their contradictoriness, to the weaving of a fatefully impacted definitional fabric already under way.” By this she refers to emerging discourses at the end of the nineteenth century about sexuality, showing how a struggle was already being waged about interpreting same-sex desire in terms of gender: “already in 1902, the new German gay rights movement, the first in the world, was to split over whether a man who desired men should be considered feminized (as in the proto-modern English “molly-house” culture and the emerging inversion model) or, to the contrary, virilised (as in the Greek pederastic or initiation model) by his choice of object” (Sedgwick, 1990:134).

¹⁶⁵ See Hugh D Ford, *A Poet’s War: British Poets and the Spanish Civil War* (1965).

Hemingway and Campbell never met, as far as I have been able to establish, but they were aware of one another,¹⁶⁶ and were both deeply interested in Spanish culture in the early 1930s, and in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), albeit on opposite sides. Both were professedly Catholic by the time the war struck, yet Hemingway worked as a reporter with Republican sympathies, while Campbell was a Nationalist supporter, strongly motivated by his sense of the injustices perpetrated on Catholic priests, nuns and institutions.

Hemingway had been a close friend of Ezra Pound's in Paris in the 1920s, and Pound had contributed much to the making of his reputation, as well as to that of Wyndham Lewis. Lewis had written an essay about Hemingway, entitled "Dumb Ox", in *Men Without Art* (1934). There can be little doubt that, if only through Lewis, Campbell was aware of Hemingway in the 1930s. And yet there is little sign of mutual interest or comment.

Bernard Bergonzi (1967) among other critics has noted some of the common ground between Hemingway and Campbell; in particular their self-styled masculinity. But the differences between them are also of interest. Where Hemingway is a latter-day adventurer, overtly metropolitan, emerging out of the depression and reconstruction following World War I, Campbell had settled in Spain and tried to immerse himself fully and permanently in its taurine traditions. As Rowland Smith has commented (1984), the actual extent of Campbell's involvement in the physical culture of Spain and Provence was surprising – he was a fisherman, a water-jouster, a herder of Camarguis cattle (in his first visit to Provence in 1920), and later a cocarde-snatcher and minor participant in traditional bullfights. *Broken Record* shows that he first tried his hand at the equestrian sports as a very young man in Paris, where he met up with some Cossack Russians, and joined them in trying to make money in a rodeo. He claims to have beaten the owner's most notorious horse, and to have earned an extra 1000 francs in return for not riding in his ring again (*CW III*, 1988:121). From there, Campbell and his Cossack friends travelled to Provence to attempt to raise a living by competing in these physical sports wherever they came up. This early experience of

¹⁶⁶ In a late review of *Bull Fever* by Kenneth Tynan, Campbell says of Hemingway that "*Death in the Afternoon* (wrong as he is about Spanish psychology, what with *toreros* and gypsies *voluntarily* joining the Reds in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), is still the most reliable handbook there is for the *suertes* (passes of the cape and the *muletas* and *estocadas*), however misleading it may be when it tries to explain the mental reactions of the crowd." ("*Tauromachy: Bull Fever* by Kenneth Tynan. Review in *National Review*, New York, Vol 1 (25 April 1956) in *CW IV*, 1988:461). As noted in chapter 1, Hemingway had a copy of Campbell's *Taurine Provence* in his Key West Library (Reynolds, 1981:107).

Provence in 1920 is what drew Campbell back to the region when the family left England in 1928.

Hemingway's involvement in bullfighting seemed altogether a more urbane, deliberate process of witnessing and recording a vivid spectacle than Campbell's. Jake Barnes, the maimed and impotent war-survivor hero of Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), takes a group of his cronies living in Paris to the fiesta at Pamplona, where they witness among others the skill of a famed matador named Romero. There is an obviously compensatory narrative at work here in which Barnes' role as witness to and educator in the work of the great matadors reinvests him with at least an aura of the sacrificed masculinity. Critics have noted that the novel's title is a rebuttal of Gertrude Stein's characterisation of the damaged young men who emerged from World War I as a "lost generation";¹⁶⁷ and it seems that, although the narrative is inconclusive in many ways, it could be argued that Barnes' vicarious involvement in bullfighting at least partly redeems his dolorous wound.

In a short essay entitled "How not to get gored", Edward Said has argued that Hemingway's interest in taurine culture was characteristic of his self-styled position as an expert on a range of different elements of "physical" culture popular in the early years of the twentieth century:

Hemingway was always a relentless expert and purveyor of expertise on such interesting subjects for early twentieth-century Americans as war, Europe, fishing, hunting, bohemia, and bullfighting. [...] Hemingway's later fiction is regularly disturbed by displays of knowledge, showy bundles of information. (1988:232)

Bullfighting is therefore a further instance of Hemingway's involvement in what "Dwight Macdonald once called 'how-to-ism'"; in Said's description, an account of how to "approach and master" reality (1988:230).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ As Constable points out, the title of the novel *The Sun Also Rises* is taken from a paragraph in the bible which asserts the cyclical and thus redemptive nature of time: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose" (*Ecclesiastes* 1:4-5). Constable claims this is "a retort to Gertrude Stein's demeaning label, "the lost generation". The sun sinks, but it also rises, it is not beaten ..." (Constable, 1990: 113).

¹⁶⁸ "[T]he practical, instructional attitude which is to be found in a great many canonical works of high literature: *Moby Dick*, for instance, can be seen as a manual of what to do if you want to go whaling, as well as an encyclopedia of everything pertaining to ships and the sea. [...] In all these cases the implication is that reality cannot stand on its own, but requires the services of an expert to convey or unlock its meaning. The converse of this is no less true, that Americans seem interested not so much in reality as in how to approach and master it, and for this expert guidance is necessary" (1988:230).

Obviously Hemingway's journalism is part of this stylistic evolution. Campbell's writing about bull culture has some elements in common – particularly where he gives lengthy and detailed accounts of the build up to a fiesta in *Taurine Provence*, which will end in a bull-fight. For both writers male action can be seen to substitute for the loss of historical consciousness, and the failure of “progress”, in interesting, if divergent ways. For Hemingway, this is in the details of reportage, description. For Campbell, perhaps, salvation lies more explicitly in a literary lineage of men of action, of whom Christ becomes the epitome.

Said argues that Hemingway's “how toism”, can be read “as a substitute for the feeling of historical depth and continuity”:

To foreground information and expertise is in many ways to say that what matters can be pushed up to the surface, and that history, insofar as it is out of easy reach, is better forgotten or, if it can't be forgotten, ignored. Experience of the here-and-now – the relevant – is therefore given priority. To the extent that the writer is able to provide such experience, to that extent his or her claims are felt as important, urgent, impressive. As a result, in no other literature is the writer so much a performing self, as Richard Poirier has observed, and in no other literature is such a premium placed on raw data and its virtuoso delivery. (Said, 1988:231)

Elements of this description are certainly apt for Campbell. In his literature too, “the writer ...is a performing self”, and certainly in *Taurine Provence*, “raw data and its virtuoso delivery” are key. And yet Campbell's immersion in the sport embraces more of its cultural context. He differs from Hemingway in his attempt to adopt it as representative of a broader culture and cultural history, and in his efforts to track this cultural history both to its present literary manifestations and to its ancient pagan roots. In this latter interest, he is perhaps closer to D.H. Lawrence.

Wyndham Lewis's relentlessly acerbic eye, however, rejects these fine distinctions. He ridicules the notion of manly “action” as a solution to what he and Campbell both saw as the weak-mindedness and hubris of their artistic contemporaries.

The lampoon of taurine solutions in *Snooty Baronet*

During the period that Campbell most staunchly supported Lewis's work, Lewis himself wrote a novel in which a Campbell figure makes a significant appearance. In *Snooty Baronet* (1932), Rob McPhail, a friend of the narrator Snooty (aka Sir Michael Kell-Imrie), is a young

poet who makes a living for his family in Provence by fishing and bullfighting and writing. Snooty visits the McPhail family en route to Iran, where he hopes to encounter the living roots of Mithraism. He has been inspired to this adventure partly by the serendipitous “discovery” of a text by D.H. Lawrence entitled *Sol Invictus: Bull Unsexed*. A glance at the text makes it clear that it is apocryphal, but its attribution to Lawrence remains puzzling. It opens with a ludicrous scene between Mithras and the Raven of his legend:

Mithras got all hot and clammy about the Bull. So as he was so much in love with the Bull, when God ordered him to go in pursuit of it with a view to killing it, since it had broken jail and gone off on its own again (like the wild animal it of course was) he sat down and wept unrestrainedly in the opening of his cave – because he did not wish to kill the Bull at all, seeing that he loved it, passionately.

“Oh why must I kill Bullie-Woolie!” Thus spake Zarathustra.

Whereupon the incorruptible Raven of God (who did all the aeropost work of the Divinity, By Divine Appointment, in perpetuity, office-boy of Zervan) ... croaked on a tree, where he sat watching Mithras narrowly.

“Don’t be a cry-baby Mithie you silly white-livered ape! – Save me from these pale bipeds!”

The Raven cast up his eyes in unfathomable contempt, for he hated this peculiar pale-faced, two legged hybrid, which his Master had seen fit to fashion, and, out of mockery, to put him over all the rest of the animals, calling him Mithras.

“Suppose anyone caught you crying!” The Raven scolded on. “It doesn’t matter to *me*, but this cave is full of rats – if they saw what a baby you were they’d think to themselves *Here’s a fine Lord and Master to have had put in authority over us! What a farce of a boss!* They might rush you one of these days when you were off your guard and chew you up! Always the Tearful Tim! Don’t you see how bad it must look!

Besides remember you’re supposed to be the Saviour of the World! You are ‘the mediator’ (I don’t think!). Blow your nose and wipe your eyes and *be a man!*”

(1932:92)

In casting “Mithie’s” complaint as the ex-cathedra dictum of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Lewis explicitly links Nietzsche’s hermit-philosopher to Zoroastrianism, the religion in which Mithras is a minor god. Where the Raven is a minor figure in the Mithraic tableau, for Lewis, god’s “office-boy” has an “officious” role as both coach and critic of Mithras’s performance. In particular, he reminds Mithras of the arbitrary nature of his powers over the beasts, a position which he will lose if he does not live up to the role of being “a man” by forceful domination. This conventional injunction to perform masculinity is then shown in a different light: it is less about gender, than about the injunction to live up to the role set for humanity as “Lord and Master” over the animals. This silly scene reveals the performances required to maintain this domineering role.

As mentioned earlier, the true interest of this fictitious “excerpt” of text is its attribution to D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence himself does not seem to have written in much detail on bullfighting, with the only explicit account of it I have found in his work being the opening scene of *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), a gory and repugnant account of a Mexican bullfight. He does, however, use Mithraism to exemplify his impassioned appeal to the notion of an “aristocracy” of men reminiscent in some aspects of Campbell’s own views. In his essay on “Aristocracy”, Lawrence eulogizes the sun as the source of “life, life, life!” (1968:478), and our relationship to it as the mark of greatness or otherwise, arguing that: “A man’s supreme moment of active life is when he looks up and is with the sun, and is with the sun as a woman is with child. The actual yellow sun of morning. This makes man a lord, an aristocrat of life” (1968:482). He says later, “He who has the sun in his face, in his body, he is the pure aristocrat. He who has the sun in his breast, and the moon in his belly, he is the first: the aristocrat of aristocrats, supreme in the aristocracy of life. Because he is *most alive*. Being alive constitutes an aristocracy which there is no getting beyond. He who is most alive, intrinsically, is King...” (1968:483). In the same essay, Lawrence attacks his “democratic” reader for his narrow understanding of existence with wonderful invective:

You idiot! You cheap-jack idiot!

Was not the ram created before you were, you twaddler? Did he not come in might out of chaos? And is he not still clothed in might? To you, he is mutton. Your wonderful perspicacity relates you to him just that far. But any farther, he is – well, wool.

Don’t you see, idiot and fool, that you have *lost* the ram out of your life entirely, and it is one great connection gone, one great life-flow broken? Don’t you see you are so much the emptier, mutton-stuffed and wool-wadded, but lifeless, lifeless... (1968:480).

And with the same sarcastic tone, he draws on the bull as his exemplar: “Do you think the bull is at your disposal, you zenith of creation?” (1968:480). While, judging from *The Plumed Serpent*, Campbell and Lawrence had different attitudes towards the bullfight, this amazing sermon on humanity’s arrogance about its knowledge and comforts echoes some of Campbell’s less eloquent attacks on a world devised to maximize human protection and comfort, and to minimize human experience of “life”. It also serves as a reminder of a long history of sun-symbolism.

In Lawrence’s essay, Mithras becomes an instance of mankind’s efforts to connect with “all things in the universe” (1968:478). However John Constable argues that Lewis’s attribution of the Mithraic treatise to Lawrence is a ruse; he suggests that the more significant object of the parody is in fact Hemingway, in spite of the fact that Hemingway, unlike Campbell and

Lawrence respectively, is never directly figured or named in *Snooty Baronet*. Constable points out the parallels between Snooty's amputated leg, and the various war-inflicted wounds of Hemingway's early heroes (Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* and Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*), shows convincingly that Lewis's knowledge of the bullfight in this novel appears to be drawn from Spanish rather than the Provençal bullfights with which Campbell was familiar at the time it was written, and also that the title of the text, *Sol Invictus – Bull Unsexed*, is in part "a loose and riddling translation into Latin of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*" (1990:113). If Constable's observations are accurate, then this minor, largely absurd, Lewis novel does at least serve to bring three very different modernists into a relationship with one another in startling ways. From the point of view of this study, Lewis gives Campbell (that is, McPhail) a synthesising part to play as embodying the apparently radically different impulses of Lawrence and Hemingway in a single figure.

Through the representation of McPhail, Lewis's commentary on a Campbellian philosophy of "action" in the novel appears to be chronically ambiguous. "Snooty", as critics have commented, is a figure who resembles Lewis himself (who was also an ex-combatant First World War survivor, though with less obvious physical marks) and appears to sustain Lewisian positions. Snooty is drawn to McPhail, but also appears to be mocking him much of the time. We witness this ambivalence in a conversation between the two characters, in which Snooty wishes to establish whether McPhail is a "Mithraist", without appearing himself to be overly interested in the matter:

"I have been getting up all about Mithras" I told him. I yawned. He did not follow suit.

"Go on!" he said, trying to look as obtuse as me.

"He was a sort of generalissimo."

"Good Lord!"

"In the proto-iranian pantheon he was the generalissimo of the Lord of Light. He was a *military* angel."

"A military angel? Good Lord Snoots!"

"His cult was a glorification of Action!"

Biting his lip, Rob nodded.

"Mussolini!" I said. "Action!"

Rob looked quite placid – as if he had expected *Mussolini*. "But what is of particular interest" (I felt like an auctioneer – this grim duty I had taken on) "in Persia *even to-day* there is ritualistic bull-fighting! Mithras. The solar myth!"

McPhail upon this immediately took an interest, or affected to, I was of course not sure which. My sixth sense – very active in the artificial gloom – told me all the time that he took absolutely no more interest in bull-fighting than I did. (1932:183)

This wonderful exchange does seem partly to parody the bored conversation of the Parisian café fashionables in Hemingway's first novel, marked by "yawns" and self-conscious efforts to "look obtuse". At the same time, it introduces the key problem of the day (fascism, figured in Mussolini) and links it to the cults of action (Hemingway) and ancient pagan experience (Lawrence). In the novel, these cults are presented as apparent antidotes to the double problem of a world in which experience itself has either been appropriated to the realm of war and death, or has become the object of alienated self-enquiry. Snooty, or Mike Kell-Imrie, works hard to get a reaction out of McPhail by using an iconoclastic vocabulary that would have appealed to the real Roy Campbell (phrases such as "military Angel", "generalissimo of the Lord of Light", for example), but comes to feel like an "auctioneer", trying to "sell" his friend a story to which he will rise. In concluding that "he took absolutely no more interest in bull-fighting than I did", we see in this dialogue the "meaningless energies" indicated by the title of Constable's essay. Lewis's satire is a bleak and rolling exposé of one set of constructed points of "meaning" after another, which "amuse" his narrator, but cannot finally interest him – or present him with any workable "truth". In his extended descriptions of Rob McPhail, Lewis reveals his deeply cynical views about the cult of action:

Rob McPhail is of our Scottish stock. That may go for something. But whether or not it is the *bred in the bone* business at the bottom of it, the likeness in our respective ways of feeling (on a number of points) is exceedingly marked. I am astonished at the likeness. It is on account of this I value him so much I think. I feel towards him as I should towards a brother. – Now like myself Rob is an actor – he is an artist in action. He purges himself daily in make-believe. I am the man-of-action incarnate. So is he. But I *act* at being in action. And he too! What man-of-action has not? Lord Nelson was a famous *actor*. Any ship's rating in his fleet was the common or garden 'man-of-action' was he not – such as *I* am not to be sure (not 'man-of-action' in that brutish sense). I am not a brute. I am *conscious* of my actions. In a word, I am a Behaviorist. (1932:182, 183)

Here Snooty distinguishes carefully between the "brutish" notion of action, and the "conscious" one – and in the process, shows that "conscious" action is not action at all, but acting, "make-believe". That the content of what is acted is not only unimportant, but also uninteresting, is a point he makes repeatedly.

This claim is best illustrated in his response to the bullfight which takes place an hour or two after their conversation about Mithraism. Finding the display tedious, Snooty takes his eyes off the ring, only to look up again to see that his friend has been crushed against the

barricade. His reaction is irritation and boredom. Life (or rather death) has interfered with the performance; his friend McPhail, “the Lord of Language”, has fatally misinterpreted his own performance as real, or “brutish”, action. And Lewis ensures that the shattered body of youthful male beauty is not redeemed.

In Said’s formulation, Hemingway’s depiction of the bullfight is an effort to access the Spanish tradition of virtuoso performance as a challenge levelled at death.

Bullfighting is the art of sustaining, prolonging, and containing the encounter with death, the matador’s arsenal of *veronicas*, *pasos naturales*, and *recibidos* lifting the slaughter of a brave animal into a structured display of exposure to and mastery over death, sculpted and clarified into three acts by such conceits as *suerte*, *dominio*, valor, and honor. ... The impression he gives is of a haunted man whose cultural – and actual – incapacity for aestheticizing the experience of death is remedied in the act of describing how the Spaniards do it through the *corrida*. (Said, 1988:233)

This is the challenge expressed by the Spanish term *duende*. Writing of the poet Gabriel Garcia Lorca, for whom Hemingway and Campbell shared a deep interest and admiration, John Berger describes *duende* as “a kind of undiabolic demon. Lorca quotes an Andalusian singer as saying ‘All that has dark sounds has *duende*.’” In discussing Lorca’s famous essay *In Search of Duende* (1955), he distinguishes this demon from the inspiration delivered by a muse or an angel. Berger writes: “For him [Lorca] a muse represents the spirit of classicism leading on to enlightenment – as, say in Poussin. An angel represents lucidity leading to Renaissance humanism – as, say, in Antonello da Messina. Both, he claims, are despised in Spain, because neither challenges death” (Berger, 1965:38).

For Hemingway, *duende* binds together the aspects of Spanish culture which give access to a sense of reality lost in his European and American metropolitan worlds. As Kristine Wilson shows:

the *cantaor*, the matador, and Hemingway all use similar techniques and tropes to the same end – to get at what Spanish novelist Miguel Unamuno and others have called “the tragic sense of life,” which Hemingway regards as essential to authenticity. (2008:75)

Wilson further points to Lorca’s use of the Nietzschean notion of “Dionysian” experience in defining *duende*. Campbell, like his contemporaries Lewis, Lawrence and Hemingway, had read Nietzsche avidly in his early adulthood, and such Dionysiac physical culture as Spanish bullfighting and the attendant *fiestas* would seem a rare remnant.

Lewis's novel, however, sneers at this effort to gain mastery over death through performance. Performance, which is "acting", for Snooty is "behaviourism" – play acting at a role, until it is mastered, but without subscribing to the delusion that it is "real". To subscribe to this delusion, however apparently redeeming it may be, is to make a profound and distasteful mistake, for it casts the conscious work of "acting" back to the mindless realm of "action", which is, strictly speaking, a descent back to the realm of the beasts.

Conclusion: Campbell and the "Poet's" War in Spain

In 1935 the Campbells moved to Toledo, where Roy bred and trained horses. They lived there until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, enduring the first weeks of the siege of the Alcazar before they managed to leave the city.¹⁶⁹ At some personal risk, the Campbells had protected documents for the Carmelites in Toledo during the siege (Alexander, 1982:163). One of Campbell's poems in *Mithraic Emblems*, "To My Jockey", gives an account of the death, at the hands of the Republicans, of a young man who worked for the Campbells in the horse-trade. This poem, as Sandra Meyer has shown, casts some light on the personal vulnerability of the Campbell family during their time in Toledo, but is worked and reworked in characteristic Campbellian terms; terms which appear exaggerated and perhaps even apocryphal.¹⁷⁰ The Campbells managed to effect a "miraculous" escape from the besieged city in August 1936, and reached a boat for England. Roy Campbell returned as a reporter for

¹⁶⁹ War broke out in July of 1936, and the Alcazar was under siege by Republican forces from Madrid within a few days. General Moscardo, the Civil Guard, and some civilian Nationalists had retreated into the ancient fortress, from where they prevented the Republican forces from establishing hold over the main square where they could muster troops. The Campbells lived in Toledo for several weeks of the siege, witnessed massacres of Carmelite priests and nuns, and had their home invaded by troops looking for fascists and Catholics. Alexander recounts the anecdote (perhaps apocryphal) that during one of these inspections, a copy of Dante was found in Campbell's bookshelf, marking him as pro-Italian and thus pro-Fascist. His quick response was to point to all the Russian authors nearby, to prove his neutrality (Alexander, 1982:164). The Campbells managed to leave Toledo by 6 August under "miraculous" circumstances, which would have confirmed Roy's identification of Toledo with the sacred "white city". A young boy named "Angel Monico" whom Campbell was schooling in the art of verse, turned up at their door bearing a gift for them of 3000 pesetas. He had been given these in return for his silence by a soldier who had killed an old man. The money allowed them to bribe their way to Valencia, from where they were put on a refugee ship, HMS *Maine*, bound for England; a journey on which they met many other Britons fleeing war-time Spain, including Laura Riding, Robert Graves, and Alan Hodge (Alexander, 1982:165).

¹⁷⁰ Meyer compares the factual and poetic alterations in several accounts of the same story, in which "Mosquito" Bargas was killed by Republican guards on a road near Toledo. Campbell himself was arrested and taken in for questioning, after some roughing up. The story is recounted in *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), but also contemporaneously in "To My Jockey", published in *Mithraic Emblems* (1936); it was later further revised into an unpublished version entitled "In Memoriam". The various versions of the tale pose questions of the tension between historical credibility and imaginative impact (Meyer, 2001).

the Nationalist insurgents in 1937, and it seems that this is the foundation of his claims to have “fought” for Franco.

Valentine Cunningham describes the “dedicated battiness of Roy Campbell’s poetic tirades on the subject of Spain” (1988:419, 420) as indicative of the mythical atmosphere surrounding the war, in which “lies and distortion of truth were commonplace” and “accusations and counter-charges of contorting reality and history flew busily between apologists for the contending sides” (1988:420). Cunningham both repeats and critiques the depiction of the Spanish Front as a “poet’s war” (see Ford, 1965), showing that over 80% of the British volunteers for the International Brigade were in fact working class. But at the same time, this added to the mythos for left wing writers who were attracted to the war, seeking to reinvest writing, poetry and language with a sense of communal purpose and shared meaning – to save it, in other words, from bourgeois exclusivity and abstraction.

Hugh Ford describes the Spanish Civil War as “the intellectual and emotional climax of the 1930s” for British poets (1965:25). While Campbell was in the minority among British writers as a Franco supporter (together with, for example, Hillaire Belloc, Evelyn Waugh, Robert Graves and Laura Riding), both Cunningham and Ford make it clear that his responses to the war had much in common with the numerous British writers who either volunteered for the International Brigade in support of the Republican government, or who lent their support as reporters or witnesses at the Front. Ford’s account of the war points to the promise it held for liberal and radical British writers and intellectuals for investing their individual talent in a communal cause. W.H. Auden, Cecil Day-Lewis, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice – collectively named MacSpaunday by Campbell – were key figures in this movement. Ford writes:

Day-Lewis has recently recollected that the “sense of engagement” of living and writing at a time when “it seemed possible to hope, to choose, to act, as individuals but for a common end,” lent urgency to everything they did. They looked across the bridge that spanned “the old romantic chasm between the artist and the man of action, the poet and the ordinary man,” and they prepared to cross over. (1965:18)

The MacSpaunday poets did not volunteer as soldiers. Cunningham writes that many writers did, of course, go to Spain, but “most of them, including Auden, Spender, Macneice, Edgell Rickword, Valentine Ackland, Sylvia Townsend Warner and David Gascoyne, as short-term

visitors, or reporters, solid with the Republican cause, anxious to do something, but not actually fighting” (1988:420). George Orwell was there, in the Republican lines, but became increasingly disillusioned about the cause, as did many other volunteers, as the influence of Stalin broke the romantic experience of the “classless ‘air of equality’” that he experienced in Catalonia in June 1937 (1988:420), and at times worked against the indigenous union movements, such as the P.O.U.M.¹⁷¹, who were the original protagonists in the conflict. Cunningham’s account of the war points to particular themes that influenced its literature, arguing that “no war literature flows redder with blood than the Spanish War’s And images of that bloodshed so freely merged naturally with the traditional rednesses of Spain: the blood of bull-fights, matador’s red capes, Goya’s scenes, the blood of the thousands of effigies of the crucified Christ worshipped with such fierceness in the peculiarly sado-masochistic adorations of Spanish Catholicism” (1988:425). Campbell, of course, played up this image in *Flowering Rifle*, but it is also continuous with the redemptive representation of blood in *Mithraic Emblems*. For Campbell, the Mithraic myth, and of course Christian myth, has already achieved the unity of the sufferer with the perpetrator – a unity which would purportedly redeem the violence of the bullfight. The left-wing writers of the Spanish war sought a politicised exit from the burden of individualism, as Cunningham writes: “Not to be on the Republican side was to settle for a bourgeois individualism and its tyrannies over against unity with the workers” (1988:437). Auden, Spender and other writers signed a questionnaire stating that: “It is clear to many of us throughout the world ... that now, as certainly never before, we are determined or compelled to take sides. The equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do.” (1988:438). Cunningham makes the interesting observation that both Right and Left are compelled to take clear positions, and forced into radical oversimplifications:

But the Left’s extremist stand against equivocation, interestingly akin to that of the totalitarian Right as represented by Roy Campbell, belied the problematic of the frontier, of going over, of the attempt to merge *I* in *We*, that were being experienced even behind the bold faces put on in *Authors Take Sides...* All through the period, foreign countries had proved easier to live in than Britain was for the bourgeois seeker of exile from his own class among the world’s workers. Public school accents, bourgeois names and table-manners were less deterring signals to Berlin boys, Parisian Left-Bankers, Russian mechanics, than to Wigan miners. (1988:437)

¹⁷¹ The Worker’s Party of Marxist Unification (Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista), which formed in opposition to the Soviet Union. Its membership was considerable during the war, but the organization was repressed by the more centrist factions associated with the Communist Party of Spain.

Class was perhaps a less pressing issue for Campbell, but the sense of community, and of a literary practice that could engage with a community, was for him, just as urgent. Franco, the Church, and the war, turned his abstract mythos developed in *Flowering Reeds* and *Mithraic Emblems* once more into an apparently urgent and grounded literary practice.



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Ernest Hemingway

Conclusion: Roy Campbell and modernism

Fiat ars – pereat mundus (create art – destroy the world), says Fascism, and expects war to supply, just as Marinetti confesses that it does, the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been altered by technology. This is the obvious perfection of *l'art pour l'art*. Humanity that, according to Homer, was once an object of spectacle [*Schauobjekt*] for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it is capable of experiencing [*erleben*] its own destruction as an aesthetic enjoyment [*Genuss*] of the highest order. So it is with the aestheticization of politics, which is being managed by Fascism. Communism responds with the politicization of art. (Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, cited in Buck-Morss, 1992:4)

In this thesis I have argued that it is worth reconsidering Roy Campbell, once a major figure in the South African English literary canon, as a minor figure in the modernist one, because of the ways in which his work and life lay bare a number of tensions endemic to literary modernism; tensions that are in many ways continuous with, or at least lay the foundations for our late twentieth and early twenty-first century notions about literature, authorship and literary community. The high modernists who were part of Campbell’s literary and social world shared a concern about the debasement of forms of expression, which in part related to the sense that notions of “community” and shared understanding had broken down in a technological and early mass-cultural age. In diverse ways, as critics have shown, they pursued a quest for a meaningful language, one which would be at once naturalized and shared but not devalued by conventional or commercial overuse. Modernist writers were concerned with the potential of language to describe or invoke “human experience”. A language that would relate to “common” experience (in both senses of “shared” and “ordinary”), but which would retain specificity, meaning, and particularity was part of this quest for an “authentic speech”.

It was in part this concern that gave rise to myriad experimental literary modernist projects. French Symbolism, for example, a significant precursor for English literary modernists including Campbell, is described by Arthur Symons in 1919 as a quasi-religious quest for truth, or for “the soul of whatever exists” through the multiple and shared meanings born by the symbol. Symons writes:

Here, then, in this revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition; in this endeavour to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realised by the consciousness; in this dutiful waiting upon every symbol by which the soul of things can be made visible; literature, bowed down by so many burdens, may at last attain liberty, and its authentic speech. In attaining this liberty, it accepts a heavier burden; for in speaking to us so intimately, so solemnly, as

only religion had hitherto spoken to us, it becomes itself a kind of religion, with all the duties and responsibilities of the sacred ritual. (1958:5)

The notion of literature as “sacred ritual” had currency for many poets writing in this secular era for all that they attempted to distance themselves from its associations with Romantic thought. Later twentieth-century critics have come to interrogate the grandiose notion of literature as a substitute for religion (an argument made, for example, in Leo Bersani’s *The Culture of Redemption*, 1990). At the same time, critics would also come to observe that the rhetorical cannot be so easily dismissed – Symons’s desire for a soulful “liberation” of meaning is itself, of course, a rhetorical invocation.¹⁷² And rhetoric held no repugnance for Campbell, despite his early immersion in Symbolism.

An important contemporary influence on Campbell, T.S. Eliot, sought to pare down expression so that it would carry the weight of culture, but also produce an immediate effect on a reader. Eliot revived the metaphysical modes of Renaissance poets, John Donne in particular, in his quest for a language that could produce what he called an “artistic emotion”. The unique individual experience of the text then would replicate, perhaps unbeknown to the reader, a cultural and traditional one. Roy Campbell also found in the Renaissance, particularly in its drama, a raw and evocative mode which for him constituted a fresh and living language. For Campbell, a “language of immediacy” related to the dramatic impact of both physical and literary expression; as he argued in *Broken Record*, “there is nothing, no difference at all, between a verb and an act. Their superiority depends entirely on what they

¹⁷² I have in mind here Paul de Man’s comments, inspired in part by a revived interest in Nietzsche in post-structuralist thought, about the impossibility of exiting a rhetorical mode:

Any question about the rhetorical mode of a literary text is always a rhetorical question which does not even know whether it is really questioning. The resulting pathos is an anxiety (or bliss, depending on one’s momentary mood or individual temperament) of ignorance, not an anxiety of reference – [...] not ... an emotive reaction to what language does, but ... an emotive reaction to the impossibility of knowing what it might be up to. Literature as well as criticism – the difference between them being delusive – is condemned (or privileged) to be forever the most rigorous and, consequently, the most unreliable language in terms of which man names and transforms himself. (Paul de Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric”, 1979:19)

In his succinct account of “Rhetoric” and its recent fortunes, M.H. Abrams notes: “The triumph in the early nineteenth century of *expressive* theories of literature (which conceive a work primarily as the expression of the feelings, temperament, and mental powers of the author himself), followed by the dominance, beginning in the 1920s, of *objective* theories of literature (which maintain that a work must be considered as an object in itself, independently of the mental qualities of the author and the responses of a reader) served to diminish, and sometimes to eliminate, rhetorical considerations in literary criticism. Since the late 1950s, however, there has been a strong revival of interest in literature as a public act involving communication between author and reader, and this has led to the development of a **rhetorical criticism** which, without departing from a primary focus on the work as such, undertakes to analyze those elements within a poem or a prose narrative which are there primarily for the reader’s sake” (1971:148).

mean in their Context” (*CW III*, 1988:152). His interest in a “physical” culture reflects this principle of energy in which “action” and “modes of expression” work in concert.

Other “experiments” with language among Campbell’s older contemporaries included Wyndham Lewis’s “Vorticism”, and the related “Imagist” movement of Ezra Pound. Pound’s famous experiments with the Chinese ideogram sought a language in which the image gave direct access to the object or the experience. The so-called “stream-of-consciousness” novelists of the 1920s and 1930s (James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, for example) sought forms of narration that could represent the interaction between the psychic work of memory and emotion, and the social and physical external world. For D.H. Lawrence, “life” meant a heightened consciousness of all the forces that make up our being in its full intensity. Within this milieu Wyndham Lewis’s lack of interest in interior experience in favour of an “externalizing” practice appears to have been unusual. Lewis’s interest in gesture and caricature suggests that, among this set of writers, he held perhaps the least “romantic” notions of artistic truth; for him it appears to have been an entirely provisional and relational concept, devoid of the potential for epiphany. Campbell shared with Lewis an interest in the dramatic and gestural mode, but unlike Lewis he did seek revelatory and redemptive mythologies in his lyric poetry.

That notions of community should be read alongside an account of the aesthetic doctrines of the writers of the day is a central tenet of Jessica Berman’s study of the modernist “politics of community”. Berman illustrates the link between the social and the aesthetic with reference to Michael Levenson’s work. As she notes, for Levenson: ““The dislocation of the self within society is recapitulated within modernist forms’ which nonetheless present ‘the nostalgic longing for a whole self’. In this model the community is either fully absent, or significantly present as a looming, oppressive force. The effort of modernist fiction then becomes the ‘effort to wrest an image of an autonomous subjectivity from intractable communal norms’” (2001:2). Campbell’s early lyric experiments with “outsider” poet-speakers are explorations of precisely this – the triumphal rejection of the faceless hordes (of metropolitan origin, which Campbell possibly accessed through Baudelaire) that constitute the enemy to the speaker’s subjectivity, but also, paradoxically, allow it to come into being through violent repudiation. Heroic encounters between the mortal individual and the vast forces of undifferentiated time in “Tristan da Cunha”, for example, thus figure society itself as being as amorphous and overwhelming as the infinite ocean, against which the speaker battles.

In her reflections on contemporary theories of community, Berman favours the account of Jean-Luc Nancy, who rejects universalizing models. She cites his argument that:

...thinking of community as an essence - is in effect the closure of the political. Such thinking constitutes closure because it assigns to community a *common* being, whereas community is a matter of something quite different, namely, of existence inasmuch as it is *in* common, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance". Community thus becomes ... integral to the experience of being itself. In the recognition of oneself as both embedded in a realm of association and bodily finite at the same time one comes to know both community and its limit. (2001:14)

The simple point to be made here in relation to Campbell is that where his poetic practice serves to pose the relationship between speaker and social and physical environment as a problem for exploration, his prose works seem to attempt to define and establish an essential notion of community with reference to military and feudal models. I suggest that his poetic notion of an "equestrian community" partakes of modernist nostalgia for "lost" forms of community, but that it is equally modernist in its imaginative invention of syncretic myths in response to this melancholia. Poetry, particularly that of Campbell's earlier volumes, becomes a rich and open realm in which to explore questions of the poetic speakers' identification, and concomitant problems of loneliness and abjection, in terms which are simultaneously existential and social – but always insistently poetic.

As Campbell critics also observe, the visions and myths with which he explores these themes are inherently masculinist. The notion of "selfhood", which I argue is the touchstone for Campbell's early lyric explorations, is for him necessarily a masculine one, as are the imagined communities which it invokes. In this again he is not alone among modernists.¹⁷³

Berman's further argument is that gender is a central term that is frequently lost in discussions of modernist "community", claiming that "the question of gender often becomes the pole around which spheres of community spin and collide, governing both their possibility and their politics" (2001:5). Campbell's framing myths, from *The Flaming Terrapin* through to *Mithraic Emblems* are profoundly homosocial; it is only in imagining a redemptive masculine myth that he can conceive of a feasible, if provisional, community in which the speaker's modernist alienation is alleviated or transformed into redemptive suffering. In this he is in company with not only his own contemporaries (one thinks of T.S. Eliot's early version of the Saint Sebastian legend, and of course of the allegorical male

¹⁷³ See for example Bonnie Kime Scott's (1990) critical anthology of modernist works and their imaginative engagement with questions of gender.

relationships in the Grail legend in *The Waste Land*), but also with a lineage traced by Eve Sedgwick (1990) in an odd backwards trajectory from contemporary country singer Willie Nelson to late nineteenth century writers as different from one another as Friedrich Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde; a lineage which she argues coheres around an account of the partly erotic, “sentimental” relations between men.

I suggest that Campbell’s poetic interests, his representations of himself as a bohemian iconoclast, and his notorious personal and literary “paradoxes”, should be located firmly within these broad modernist concerns, as a number of critics have established with regard to specific aspects of his work. What his writing adds to the discussion of modernism, I suggest, is the presence of themes relating to his colonial upbringing, to feudal (or historically “arrested”) social modes, and, of most interest to me, to a rewriting of a range of masculinist myths which become his method of engaging with the notion of the “self”. It is the bold and explicit way in which Campbell explores these myths, I suggest, that makes them valuable registers of the concerns of his time.

On the one hand, he draws on the modernist fascination with the moral and perspectival groundlessness of modern experience, as explored within Baudelaire’s vision of the tensions between grandiose and the abject, the satanic and the angelic – between, in Baudelaire’s own categories, “spleen and ideal”. For Campbell, in Rowland Smith’s fine early commentary on his work, this tension is embodied in his favoured poetic modes of “lyric and polemic” – forms which respectively allow him to explore interior emotive conditions, and to express an external, declarative voice. On the other hand Campbell’s poetry also displays a fascination with the power of rhetoric to bring into being a (masculine) selfhood, if only a provisional one, in a mode that has epic roots, made “modern” through association with Nietzsche. Nietzsche and Baudelaire between them constitute his major sources for an exploration of the dislocated self in modernizing urban society, and the role of rhetoric and poetry in transforming that self into a focal point of reference. Their influence is also foundational to many other early twentieth century modernist writers. As Campbell himself wrote in his *Voorslag* essay, “Eunuch Arden and Kynoch Arden: Two tendencies in modern literature”: “Baudelaire explored the darkest abysses of human consciousness... It remained for Nietzsche to voice the whole subconscious spirit of the age in ‘Zarathustra’ the greatest poem, next to ‘Faust’, of the last century” (VS, 1926 1(2):37).

“Selfhood”, however, is necessarily defined in relation to a notional community, although this may be an invisible element of the enquiry. Susan Buck-Morss dates the fantasy of self-making, or “autotelism”, back to the Enlightenment beginnings of the modern age, with its apex in the literature of modernism. She traces this fantasy in her re-reading of Walter Benjamin’s famous essay on “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, which points to the immensely complex philosophical (and political) weight that the realm of aesthetics comes to bear in early twentieth century Anglo-European thought. It is worth recapitulating her argument here in some detail because it relates in curious ways to Campbell’s alliance with fascist thinking, his interest in physical action, and his understanding of a redemptive, if curiously provisional and performative notion of “self”.

Buck-Morss’s essay reflects on Benjamin’s famous account of the relationship between aesthetics and politics by interrogating the term “aesthetics”, which, as she shows, originally refers to a discourse of the senses. From this, she glosses the concluding paragraph of Benjamin’s essay, cited as the epigraph to this conclusion, as follows:

He [Benjamin] is demanding of art a task far more difficult [than representing political propaganda] – that is, to *undo* the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to *restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity’s self-preservation*, and to do this, not by avoiding the new technologies, but by *passing through* them. (1992:5, original emphasis)

The status of sensory experience in the age of mechanization and urbanization is of major concern to modernist writers, and it is Benjamin, in Buck-Morss’s view, who identifies this as the central problem. In this reading of Benjamin, Buck-Morss implies that modernist experimental projects, which aim to restore an experiential “immediacy” to language, are centrally driven by a concern about the relationship of language to the world of sensation, and its ability to restore this to alienated modern urban subjects. Campbell’s “equestrian community”, or his Nietzschean notion of a “physical aristocracy”, is his own particular response to this problematic – a means of imagining the restoration of the sensory, the physical to human “experience”.

Without wanting to apologize for Campbell’s support of fascism and Franco, it seems important to consider the further implications that Benjamin draws about the relationship between politics and aesthetics, which is so fraught within this literature. Benjamin is the early voice who most clearly names the association between the Fascist triumph of cold aesthetics over a humanist politics, and the Communist response to it, which he describes as

“the politicization of art”. In this account then, Benjamin’s vision is of a world caught between a triumphal (fascist) notion of an ordered and potent sensory universe, and a world in which individual human sensory experience (recorded in art) subserves a utilitarian communal project. But neither Fascism nor Communism lies at the heart of the problem, according to Buck-Morss; this is to be found in modern experience itself. In her words: “Benjamin is saying that sensory alienation lies at the source of the aestheticization of politics, which fascism does not create, but merely ‘manages’. We are to assume that both alienation and aestheticized politics as the sensual conditions of modernity outlive fascism – and thus so does the enjoyment taken in viewing our own destruction” (1992:4). It is perhaps worth noting that Benjamin’s understanding of “modern experience” draws significantly on Baudelairean depictions of urban experience; thus from his different corner of the globe and with an entirely different conception, Benjamin shared this vision of modern human experience with Campbell, and numerous other experimentalists of his time.¹⁷⁴

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider our twenty-first century contemporary engagements with this problem, but a literary interest in the potential of representing experience surely remains an ongoing interest – not least in the current interest in a realm of experience which is extremely hard to access, known as “animal studies”. The political ramifications of such enquiries may be increasingly subtle and complex, but remain related to the problems of politicized aesthetics (or the “fascist” aestheticized politics) characteristic of modernist writings.

It might be argued, though again this cannot be pursued here, that the fantasy of the autotelic has its ultimate expression in the modernist theory of poetic impersonality – a theory which, as Ellmann has shown, underpins an ongoing twentieth century debate about the relationship of the living author to the textual object. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Campbell’s

¹⁷⁴ See Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (1983).

In her “Introduction” to *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt points out the profound influence of Baudelaire on Benjamin’s intellectual trajectories, and his further impact of turning Benjamin towards Paris and away from German intellectual traditions (1968: 22). Arendt points out that Paris remains the only major city worldwide that can comfortably be walked, and contrasts it to the suburban “wasteland” of American cities. Paris then becomes the natural home for the public encounters of urban “outsiders”. As she puts it: “What all other cities seem to permit only reluctantly to the dregs of society – strolling, idling, flânerie – Paris streets actually invite everyone to do. Thus, ever since the Second Empire the city has been the paradise of all those who need to chase after no livelihood, pursue no career, reach no goal – the paradise then, of bohemians, and not only of writers and artists but of all those who have gathered about them because they could not be integrated either politically – being homeless or stateless – or socially” (1968:21). She further suggests, intriguingly, that “flânerie” is an analogy for Benjamin’s idiosyncratic and exploratory thinking “when he, like the flâneur in the city, entrusted himself to chance as a guide on his intellectual journeys of exploration” (1968:43).

working friendship with Wyndham Lewis was cemented in part by the sense that they believed they shared an understanding of the “personal” and expressive relationship of writer to text. As satirists, both men saw art as a weapon of change and critique. As critics, for a short period of time they both attempted to negotiate a position somewhat different from the explorations of primal experience associated with D.H. Lawrence, and the “scientific” impersonal modes of Pound and Eliot. For Lewis, Lawrentian primitivism exemplified what he termed the “time-mind” – a Bergsonian-influenced fascination with the early stages of the self, be they social (as in the social-Darwinist notion that “primitive” societies are in their infantile stage, maturing towards “civilization”) or individually infantile (as in ‘Peter-Pannism’); and Campbell enthusiastically took up this call. Yet Campbell had established himself as a figure who embodied versions of these regressive trends. He played himself as a Zulu warrior in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as a “Sonnenkind” – a figure whose self-styling expressed the rebellion of beautiful, outrageous and self-cultivated youth against mature and politic masculinity. Living and writing in this context, Campbell had struggled to establish a clear position on what he took to be the problem of “civilization”. He perceived this term to be much abused in the South African context, but also felt there was something base and abject about the Anglo-European repudiation of its own fallen and now pathetically devastated post-war “civilization”. He shared with Lewis a sense that artistic “personality” is a key antidote to the malaise of the social world and its compromises and failures. The rejection of individuality, for Campbell, is a key mark of misanthropy; and programmes for social improvement embody evil for him for this reason. But I have suggested also that the animosities Campbell cultivated against such programmes, and especially towards the left wing writers with an interest in the Spanish war – Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis, Macneice – to an extent masks the proximity of their concerns, for all the important distinctions between their political sympathies.

Campbell’s common ground with Lewis, though, was limited. For a time he saw Lewis as an epic novelist, creating titanic figures with large mythical meanings like his own grandiose, if abject, poetic figures of Adamastor, Tristan da Cunha, or Noah of his early epic. However as Woodward rightly points out, Lewis was not an epic novelist. His writing is profoundly the work of a cynic, a satirist, a congenital critic who refused the comforts of a redemptive vision, and saw his role as a relentless provocateur. Where for Campbell Lewis produces the cosmic laughter of the titans, for other critics, Lewis wraps up humanity into small, absurd,

growthless spaces and sets the puppets in motion – in Yeats’ wonderful formula, his stunted creations resemble “homunculi in bottles”.

Campbell’s conservative responses to the issues of the day are also connected to his dandyism. Both Martin Green and Ellen Moers’ studies of dandyism show it to be a conservative mode of rebellion against certain sets of social expectation. In the case of the 1920s, as Green shows, the “children of the sun” rebelled against a certain kind of manly maturing expected of an elite set of highly educated, and often wealthy or aristocratic young men who entered Oxford in the years immediately following World War I. This set of dandies had an important role in allowing, creating and sustaining many of the new art forms that brought “modernism” to England – in painting, ballet and poetry. Roy Campbell was at Oxford for a year in 1919. He failed to enter the University and thus “failed” to take on the mantle of effective manhood that Oxford was meant to convey for English speaking South African men of education and ambition. What he shares with dandy culture – although his expressions are more roguish, or would-be roguish – is that dedication to his own legend, the recourse to a style, and the ascetic refusal to accept certain notions of responsibility along with the comforts of an institutionalized position.

While this thesis is unable to explore the parallels in any detail, I want to suggest that there is scope for further enquiry into the sense of social dislocation which concerned high Anglo-European modernist writers, and the very different but perhaps related concerns of early South African writing in English; and further, that the figures of William Plomer and Roy Campbell would be important to such an enquiry. The problem of canonicity and community in South African literature is as fraught as that in modernist writing, although at first glance this is for distinctly different reasons. In his introductory piece on “South Africa in the Global Imaginary”, Leon de Kock cites Stephen Gray’s description of the South African writer as existing “at any of several boundaries (not at the centre of one self-enclosed group); his or her act of making literature is part of transferring data across that boundary, from one audience to another – an act which in its broadest sense may be termed ‘translation’.” De Kock suggests that, once writing has entered the South African scene following European “discovery” and colonization in the sixteenth century, a “crisis of inscription takes hold” (2004:9), which is marked by the “insecurity or arrogance” in the verbal slip “from ‘I’, to ‘we’, to ‘us’.” This slippage “has marked the always alluring but ultimately quixotic attempt to bring a certain order of composure, of settlement, to a place of profound difference” (2004:10). He goes on

to argue, following Noel Mostert, that “the ubiquitous South African ‘frontier’, as much cultural and psychological as territorial, has historically constituted one of the great meeting points: a place ... of simultaneous convergence and divergence and where a representational seam is the paradox qualifying any attempt to imagine organicism or unity” (2004:12). This failure of an “organic” notion of community in the South African context, both of a social or a literary canonical one, is traced by de Kock to the torsions of power that have so overtly governed South African colonial history, and with it, conditioned South African writing over the years of apartheid and prior to it (2004:17,18).

It seems worth remarking though, that a study of literary modernism reveals similarly “paradoxical” or strained accounts of the relationship between self and social world. What de Kock shows in this argument is that while South Africa is perhaps no different from any other nation globally which has been shaped into its modern form by the violent history of colonialism, what is perhaps instructive about South African writing is that, in as much as this history has overtly extended way past its sell-by date, the consequences on the national imagination remain writ large. Fundamentally, though, the conflicting elements of desire, fear, imaginative extensions and retreats of the self are just as evident in the Anglo-European modernist imagination – at least since Baudelaire and Nietzsche revived paradox and ambivalence as a crucial mode of enquiry in a world in which the grand nineteenth century narratives of social progress and exportable belief systems no longer sustain conviction, and questions of “selfhood” partly take their place.

Graham Pechey’s account of the condition of post-apartheid South African writing explicitly connects the hyperbolic tensions evident in South African literary history to the broader problems associated with twentieth century modernity, and modernism, arguing that South Africa has no more escaped the problematic of colonialism in its post-Apartheid phase than has the rest of the world. He suggests that, post-Apartheid, we are in a phase of “arrested colonialism” – the latest in a series of neo-colonial phases. However, this is not a critique of the specifics of South African politics, but “a concern with the limits of the political itself”. As Pechey argues:

The metanarratives of nationalism and communism alike have proved in too many empirical cases to be instances of that idolatrous *hubris* of modernity which diverts the worship proper only to God or gods on to unworthy worldly objects. Postmodern critiques of modernity have suggested that that heady freedom of the subject’s self-grounding which the modern world held out at its beginning turns at length into

bondage. This bondage is then one from which we cannot be freed by a simple return to the premodern: either to the universe of Christian discourse from which secular reason severed itself in early modernity, or to the native spiritual traditions of the colonized world. Opportunities for re-imagining community without setting up the false gods of an overreaching politics open at sundry moments in history; it is as latter-day prophets of these rare moments that we value writers wherever they may be. (Pechey, 1998:60)

In Roy Campbell's oeuvre, it is the tension between his Nietzschean insistence on "the heady freedom of the subject's self-grounding", and its attendant "bondage", that illustrates this process. Campbell's early poetry, and in particular the poems published in the *Adamastor* volume, rework his dandified melancholia into a poetic theme through which this struggle can be traced, and which leads him at length to a poetic return to a Catholic and Spanish "pre-modern". As a poet however, these questions are never settled; perhaps it is through his commitment to translation in the 1950s that Campbell comes to locate his enquiries into the relationship between self and world in the works and enquiries of others.

In this dissertation I have argued that the value of reconsidering Campbell's now apparently anachronistic representations of his poetic self lies in the way in which it enables us to track the tension between its insistence on subjective autonomy – and its necessary limits – and recourse to a highly specific and eclectic literary canon as a space that offers alternative notions of community. Campbell's consciousness of himself as an "outsider", both as modernist and as South African writer, adds a clear and readable dimension to the tension between his egotistical gestural discourse of self-making and his, at times abject, identification with a tentative and syncretic modernist version of heroic myth. For Campbell's explorations of questions of expression, selfhood and exile, poetic tradition, and literary community, I suggest that the contexts of early twentieth century Anglo-European and South African literature can be seen as mutually constructive.

Appendix 1: Poems

Benediction

When by an edict of the powers supreme
A poet's born into this world's drab space,
His mother starts, in horror, to blaspheme
Clenching her fists at God, who grants her grace.

'Would that a nest of vipers I'd aborted
Rather than this absurd abomination.
Cursed be the night of pleasures vainly sported
On which my womb conceived my expiation.

Since of all women I am picked by You
To be my Mate's aversion and his shame:
And since I cannot, like a *billet-doux*
Consign this stunted monster to the flame,

I'll turn the hatred, which You load on me,
On the curst tool through which You work your spite,
And twist and stunt this miserable tree
Until it cannot burgeon for the blight'.

She swallows down the white froth of her ire
And, knowing naught of schemes that are sublime,
Deep in Gehenna, starts to lay the pyre
That's consecrated to maternal crime.

Yet with an unseen Angel for protector
The outcast waif grows drunken with the sun,
And finds ambrosia, too, and rosy nectar
In all he eats and drinks, suspecting none.

He sings upon his *Via Crucis*, plays
With winds, and with the clouds exchanges words:
The Spirit following his pilgrim-ways
Weeps to behold him gayer than the birds.

Those he would love avoid him as in fear,
Or, growing bold to see one so resigned,
Compete to draw from him a cry or tear,
And test on him the fierceness of their kind.

In food or drink that's destined for his taste
They mix saliva foul with cinders black,
Drop what he's touched with hypocrite distaste,
And blame themselves for walking in his track.

His wife goes crying in the public way
- 'Since fair enough he finds me to adore,
The part of ancient idols I will play
And gild myself with coats of molten ore.

I will get drunk on incense, myrrh, and nard,
On genuflexious, meat, and heady wine.
Out of his crazed and wondering regard,
I'll laugh to steal prerogatives divine.

When by such impious farces bored at length,
I'll place my frail strong hand on him, and start,
With nails like those of harpies in their strength,
To plough myself a pathway to his heart.

Like a young bird that trembles palpitating,
I'll wrench his heart, all crimson, from his chest,
And to my favourite beast, his hunger sating,
Will fling it in the gutter with a jest.'

Skyward, to where he sees a Throne blaze splendid,
The pious Poet lifts his arms on high,
And the vast lightings of his soul extended
Blot out the crowds and tumults from his eye.

'Blessed be You, O God, who give us pain,
As cure for our impurity and wrong
Essence that primes the stalwart to sustain
Seraphic raptures that were else too strong.

I know that for the Poet you've a post,
Where the blest Legions take their ranks and stations,
Invited to the revels with a host
Of Virtues, Powers, and Thrones, and Dominations.

That grief's the sole nobility, I know it,
Where neither Earth nor Hell can make attacks,
And that, to deck my mystic crown of poet,
All times and universes paid their tax.

But all the gems from old Palmyra lost,
The ores unmixed, the pearls of the abyss,
Set by Your hand, could not suffice the cost
Of such a blazing diadem as this.

Because it will be only made of light,
Drawn from the hearth of the essential rays,
To which our mortal eyes, when burning bright,
Are but the tarnished mirrors that they glaze.'

- (Translated Roy Campbell, *CW II*, 1988:63,64,65)

Les Chercheuses de Poux – after Rimbaud (First published in *Voorslag*, 1(2), August 1926)

When the child's brow, with torment flushing red,
Implores white dreams to shed their hazy veils,
Two sisters, tall and fair, approach his bed
Whose fingers glint with silver-pointed nails.

They seat him at a window where the blue
Air bathes a sheaf of flowers: with rhythms calm,
Into his heavy hair where falls the dew,
Prowl their long fingers terrible with charm.

He hears their breathing whistle, in long sighs,
Flowing with ghostly pollen; and the hiss
Of indrawn spittle as if each suppressed,
Upon her lips a hesitated kiss.

Brushing cool cheeks, their feathered lashes flick
The perfumed silences: through drifting veils
He hears their soft electric fingers click
The death of tiny lice with royal nails.

Drowsed in the deep wines of forgetfulness
His soul a faint delirious music hears
And to the rhythm of their slow caress
Wavers and pauses on the verge of tears.

- (translated Roy Campbell, *CW II*, 1985:283)

WESTERN CAPE

The Giantess (Charles Baudelaire)

Of old when Nature, in her verve defiant,
Conceived each day some birth of monstrous mien,
I would have lived near some young female giant
Like a voluptuous cat beside a queen;

To see her body flowering with her soul
Freely develop in her mighty games,
And in the mists that through her gaze would roll
Guess that her heart was hatching sombre flames;

To roam her mighty contours as I please,
Ramp on the cliff of her tremendous knees,
And in the solstice, when the suns that kill

Make her stretch out across the land and rest,
To sleep beneath the shadow of her breast
Like a hushed village underneath a hill.

- (translated Roy Campbell, *CW II*, 1985:84)

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