



Celia M. Wallhead (ed.)

Writers of the Spanish Civil War

The Testimony of
their Auto/Biographies

Spanish Perspectives on English and American Literature,
Communication and Culture

This book brings together new essays on six of the most important British and American writers who lived in or visited Spain in the 20th century and whose work bears the impact of the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of its outbreak, the new angle on the relations between these authors and Spain is the examination of the mutual bond and its fruits from the point of view of life-writing. The six writers – five British and one American – are presented in chronological order of their birth: Gerald Brenan, Robert Graves, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Stephen Spender and Laurie Lee. Their autobiographies, or what they wrote about their lives in or in relation to Spain, are contrasted with the often multiple biographies that were written on them.

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Writers of the Spanish Civil War

***Spanish Perspectives on English and American Literature,
Communication and Culture***

Edited by

*María José Álvarez-Faedo, Manuel Brito, Andrew Monnickendam &
Beatriz Penas-Ibáñez*

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Introduction

Fresh from celebrating, in 2009, the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War, in the year 2011, we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of its outbreak. Apart from the Second World War, few conflicts have agglomerated writings on such a large scale as this one, which has given rise to a whole industry of Civil War texts: books – non-fiction and fiction alike – essays, articles, pamphlets and reviews, Ph D theses and local studies, as well as works in other genres such as film. In a recent (2006) study on the English-speaking members of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, the editors put the figure at possibly over 35,000 titles (Celada et al 2006, 89). They quote Paul Preston, who suggested a figure of 20,000 twenty years earlier, on the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Civil War (Preston 1986, 24), and the figure has been growing steadily. They even assert that by the same period, the mid-80s, as many as 700 novels had been written with the Civil War or its aftermath as the setting (Celada et al 2006, 89).

So, one may ask, why bring out another book on the Spanish Civil War? The answer is that the contributors to this collection have attempted to view the subject from a different angle. First of all, it is not a book about the Civil War *per se*, but more about Spain in the twentieth century as a stimulus in different ways to some of the most important English-speaking writers of the day. We interpret stimulus in a very wide sense, and under its umbrella we place not only the political challenge the Civil War of the 1930s posed to many outsiders, but also the idea of Spain as a utopia or a place of escape and refuge from Britain or America, for different personal reasons. Once acquainted with Spain, its climate and geography, history and culture, the concept took on the power of inspiration or muse – to use Robert Graves's term – for the writing of some of the visiting authors.

Secondly, the new angle on the relations between Spain and those authors who came to visit or to stay is that we have examined the mu-

tual bond and its fruits from the point of view of life-writing: their autobiographies, or what they themselves wrote about their lives in or in relation to Spain, and, contrasted with these, the often multiple biographies that were written on them. Again, one might ask, given the boom in life-writing in recent years, why another book on biography? The answer is that these two topics, Spain and its English-speaking 'travellers' of the twentieth century and their biographies have not been considered in tandem before.

In these postmodern times, historiography and biography share common ground: both attest to the truth without ever being able to truly achieve that elusive ideal. A so-called historical account is always someone's point of view, more or less partial or biased. Antonio Celada and his co-editors in the work previously mentioned about the English-speaking members of the International Brigades have an interesting point. They quite rightly assert that the generally-accepted notion that history is written by the victors, is not applicable in the case of the Spanish Civil War (Celada et al 2006, 89). Indeed, the ink has flowed on the topic in greater volumes from the pens of the defeated supporters of the legitimate government of the Republic than from those of supporters of Franco.

Throughout the twentieth century, there has been a general equation between the intelligentsia and the Left, and it is the intelligentsia who feel impelled to write – in this particular case, the Republic famously fomented Culture (Cunningham 1988, 452) – even if it is to render testimony to their defeats. Of the six most famous twentieth-century writers associated with Spain that we have chosen to study, two were apolitical and testified to hating war – Gerald Brenan and Robert Graves – while the others sided with the Republic with a vehemence on a scale from outrage (Laurie Lee) to total commitment (George Orwell at the beginning). None of the writers we have chosen were supporters of Franco's uprising, but possible subjects such as Roy Campbell have been excluded, not on account of their politics, but because they did not have a continued relationship with Spain or produce a body of first-class writing on the geo-politically related topic. Equally, it would have been more politically correct to include women writers who came to Spain, or who were in Spain at the time and wrote of their experiences, such as Sylvia Townsend Warner,

Gamel Woolsey or Kate O'Brien, but again, they did not become 'famous writers of the thirties' or writers largely associated with Spain. The writers we have chosen are presented in chronological order of their births and most were famous already in the thirties. All but two, Orwell and Hemingway, whose lives were truncated either by illness or by their own hand, lived to a ripe old age and thus transcended the concept of 'writers of the thirties,' although some, like Spender, produced their best work then, and in all the subsequent years wrote little to better it. Study and juxtaposition of early biographies with those of recent years with the results of their new research that are gaining currency reveals truths that could not be appreciated at the time.

If we look again at the conjunction of Spain and biography, we see that it is a discursive system of representation that can be of mutual benefit. To give an example: in 1987, the mayor of Almuñécar, Juan Carlos Benavides Yanguas, awarded Laurie Lee the town's highest honour, the Golden Avocado, for his services to the town, lightly disguised as 'Castillo' in his writing. These 'services' implied an important contribution to the encouragement of the tourist trade, in that, as a result of his book *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (1969), and subsequent film (1984–7), Almuñécar had been placed on the tourist routes of Andalusia, much as Granada had been over a century before by writers like Richard Ford, George Borrow or Washington Irving. Laurie Lee had previously, rather deprecatingly, said about Spain that 'what people go for is not to discover the world and foreign ways but to be guaranteed familiar food and sunshine [...]' (Grove 1999, 401). He may be right to a certain extent, but he was not always so cynical, and Benavides is not wrong in holding that Almuñécar has benefitted from Lee's publicity, and not for the reason that it offers sunshine, as almost all of Spain does so without too much effort. Travellers and holidaymakers do go to certain parts of a country as a result of what they read or watch, but given that good biographies tend to be as successful as some travel writing, often on the best-seller lists, it stands to reason that as many, or more, people set out on pilgrimages inspired by what they have read in a biography as by what they have read in the writer's own works.

In this study, we have endeavoured to examine the views of Spain that emerge through reading the biographies of those English-speaking

writers who were extensively involved with Spain in the twentieth century, both before, during and after the Civil War. Amongst the six, there are similarities and dissimilarities as regards the war. For example, those most engaged in the war either in the fighting or reporting of it at close hand, Orwell and Hemingway, came to Spain from outside specifically to be there, whilst those who were there already, Graves, Brenan and Lee, all left, with only the latter returning within the year as a result of a crisis of conscience. Spender's reason for coming to Spain was on account of a personal relationship rather than for political reasons. The two older men who left, Brenan and Graves, had already served their apprenticeship to war in the First World War, and did not see the Spanish war as 'their' war, though the former sought to understand it and in the end contributed most to the writing on the conflict. They all tried to 'understand' Spain, with the same sincerity, if, at first, the same ingenuousness, as Mrs Moore and Adela Quested trying to get at the 'real India' in Forster's *A Passage to India*. They all, to a greater or lesser extent, were following utopian dreams for a better society after the 'War to End All Wars,' or were dedicated to the struggle to protect what they considered the better aspects of the society which were vulnerable and at risk in the circumstances.

Another reason for analysing this body of biography is to further pursue the 'truth factor' in terms of the subjects. For in recent decades, it has been recognised that biography in general is not necessarily always synonymous with fact. Since English biography was revolutionised by Lytton Strachey (a friend of our first subject, Gerald Brenan), and further developed for the best-seller market by such as Michael Holroyd and Richard Holmes, it has witnessed a growing rapprochement with fiction, just as fiction itself in the last decades of the twentieth century has often formed a symbiosis with factual writing. Biographers form close relationships with their subjects, and this proximity, along with their personal attitudes, is made more or less manifest in the text. In the evaluation of the success or otherwise of the biography, the biographer's intrusion or self-effacement, among other objectives, may be relevant. The biographer's attitude to his or her subject is fundamental in the question of whether the resulting work is suffused with praise and thus a hagiography, or is an ideological construct of reprehension

and turns into a 'hatchet-job,' or, as is more usual nowadays, aims at impartiality and is somewhere in between.

At the end of the 1980s, Valentine Cunningham showed that research was emerging all the time to corroborate or refute what the activists had affirmed. He cites as an example Peter Alexander's 1982 biography of Roy Campbell which revealed the truth about the poet's 'self-publicized exploits in Spain,' (1988, 451) that turned out to be largely fantasies, as he returned to England on the same boat from Valencia as Robert Graves and Laura Riding, on 9th August 1936 (452).

Cunningham's *British Writers of the Thirties* (1988), especially his chapter 13 'Spanish Front' (419–461), provides the details of the large picture of what he calls 'a poet's war.' His list includes the familiar names such as Auden, Spender, MacNeice, Valentine Ackland, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Roy Campbell and George Orwell ('only marginally a poet,' 420), and the less well-known. He lists those who died: John Cornford, Julian Bell, Charles Donnelly and Christopher Caudwell; but the poets did not have a monopoly: he reminds us that Felicia Browne, 'another militant non-writing artist' was 'the first Briton to be killed fighting in Spain' (*ibid.*). Indeed, he lists six boxing champions who went to fight in Spain (428). One wonders if they were originally going to the 'People's Olympiad' of July 1936, which was set up by the Left in protest against the Berlin Olympics but was cancelled because of the outbreak of the war. For these, aggression and belligerence would be part of their professional life, but for the poets, the necessity for killing was a problem (422). Blood and bullfighting became a motif for descriptions of the war, not only amongst fans like Hemingway, but others like Spender and Lee (426).

Cunningham has found in their writings the common denominator of the motif of the journey, the 'rhetoric of travel' (431), place-names figuring significantly in Auden's 'Spain,' Spender's 'To a Spanish Poet' or 'Port Bou' and Sylvia Townsend Warner's 'Barcelona,' to name but a few. The map of Spain became, in the words of the first published version of Spender's 'To a Spanish Poet,' 'The map of pain' (432). The journey was often from a figurative prison to another, often real, prison: 'A great deal of Spanish War writing and activity concerns prisons,' writes Cunningham, '[i]f, as was earlier argued, the '30s was in general caged, imprisoned in the destructive element,

Spain and the writing about it only confirmed and amplified that caging' (430). Laurie Lee was imprisoned, though it seems but briefly, and Spender went to Spain to rescue his former lover T.A.R. Hyndman from imprisonment for cowardice and desertion. Some fled, if not prison, a sense of 'caging' back in Britain, whether it was from domestic and romantic entanglements (John Cornford, 445), from the inability to create true comradeship in Britain on account of the class system (439) and such bourgeois dilemmas (440), or the repression of homosexuality. Roy Campbell made a notorious attack on Spender and extrapolated that all those who favoured the Republican cause were 'inverted' (441).

The journey could be arduous, crossing mountains (453) and the frontier (436). But sometimes, a jolly train trip to Spain (435) could become a sort of holiday outing to the sun (443), which students and academics like Philip Toynbee and Louis MacNeice could make during their university vacations (444).

On a more serious note, the journey to Spain could involve an inner journey. This was so for both Spender and Orwell, particularly the latter, whose journey to the truth, which he insisted on telling, speaking up against the false myths perpetrated by some on the Left, led to him being 'maligned and ostracized' (461). George Baker wrote this in his poem 'To Stephen Spender':

Let me see now not the irregular fountain
 Whence poems rose like crystals, glittering truth,
 But the tall chap with a leg like a flying buttress,
 A hand for a saw, a face worth a fortune,
 But for the distorted torture of the mouth
 Which to his words of truth bore such a witness.¹

Inner journeys tended to reveal that 'glory-mongering' (Cunningham, 456) and Byronic Romantic heroics, the '30s Bigness Heroic' (459) had to be avoided. The outcome was not Utopia but a sense of sin (467), of cowardice (Spender) or a miserable death, so closely avoided by Orwell and Lee, and not avoided at all by others. It is precisely this inner life which is the objective of biography, especially literary bio-

1 George Baker *Collected Poems* (1957).

graphy, says Backscheider; for the modern fascination with a writer's inner life – which we suppose to exist – is a large part of its appeal: 'Because writers are believed to have secret, creative, even fantasy-rich imaginations, they seem to offer unusual opportunities to understand the interior, subjective life' (Backscheider 2001, 104).

The lives of the six writers we have chosen, five British and one American: Gerald Brenan, Robert Graves, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Stephen Spender and Laurie Lee, have been charted in the same way by the contributors. First there is a brief biographical outline to situate our authors and remind readers of the major events in their lives and their works; secondly, if the writer produced an autobiography, it is discussed as a base against which to compare the biographies; thirdly, a resumé of all or of the major biographies is made in order to map the scope and variety of life-writing on the subject (in the case of Hemingway, for example, the search yielded too many to deal with); and fourthly, the study focuses in detail upon one or two of the more prominent biographies available. The conclusions which our contributors draw offer a more accurate and up-to-date picture of the lives and writings of authors whose works were shaped to a greater or lesser degree by their experiences of Spain.

In addition to similarities and differences between them regarding their situation before the Civil War broke out, there are other things in common between some of them. Brenan and Graves were both living in Spain before the war broke out, were repatriated to Britain, but then returned to Spain to reside. They share traumatic memories of the First World War which also reminded them of the trauma of bullying at their respective public schools. The former came to write extensively on Spain, her history and literature, and to become an expert, while the latter wrote prolifically on the history of a wider Mediterranean area. Brenan, Laurie Lee and even Hemingway, to a lesser extent, came to know the local people and understood their attitudes to outsiders. As Hemingway wrote in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*:

If you knew Spanish he was prejudiced in your favor, if you knew his province it was much better, but if you knew his village and his trade you were in as far as any foreigner ever could be (135).

In view of the great books both Brenan and, to a lesser extent, Lee, wrote about Spain, Hemingway's 'anxiety of influence,' expressed through his character Robert Jordan, the American college teacher of Spanish who fights as a militiaman for the Loyalists in this novel is ironic. Jordan had written a book about Spain which proved unsuccessful because 'there had been such good books written by Borrow and Ford and the rest that he had been able to add very little' (248). On occasion, through the writings and the biographies, we learn of attitudes some of our writers held towards the others. Lee, for example, read and 'dismissed' Hemingway. Admittedly, this was long after the event. Laurie Lee had offered many oral versions of his experiences of the Civil War, but no official account until fifty years later, when he finally got round to writing *A Moment of War* (1991), and he chose that title because he had to admit that he had not been there for the duration, indeed, a mere nine weeks. Although he alleges that he lost the notebooks he kept in 1937, he was able to write with hindsight and consult the basic facts in Hugh Thomas's authoritative account *The Spanish Civil War* (1961). Lee frankly states that he was not aware at the time that other writers, such as Orwell, were there. He has a personal testimony that Gerald Brenan, for example, does not have, but he knew that he could not match the historical perspective that Brenan and Hugh Thomas brought to the task. But he stands by his 'poetic truth,' though exaggerated and romanticised, as being closer to the mark than biased accounts such as those of Hemingway were shown to be. Indeed, Robert Gittings has defined what the best of biography should be, and that is 'poetry with a conscience.'²

The contributors to this volume have tried to apply some of the ideas gleaned from Michael Holroyd's study of biography *Works on Paper* (2002). We have asked ourselves, for example, if the subject was converted into a myth by his family and if this affected the production of a more objective view. We have looked into the reason for writing the biography: did the writer or the trustees of the writer's estate approach the biographer of their choice? Was the job of the biographer made easier or more difficult by the other people working on the material? Was there freedom to write on such potentially deli-

2 *The Nature of Biography* 1978.

cate subjects as homosexuality or the intelligence service? Does the biographer 'disappear' and then reappear by mixing his or her identity with that of the biographee? Holroyd calls this one of the cardinal sins of biography: 'the aim of which is to resurrect the dead and not be absorbed into a dead world oneself' (35).

The six essays in this collection are penned by colleagues and friends at the University of Granada's Department of English, centred upon the research group HUM 424 'Estudios de Narrativa en Lengua Inglesa' ('Studies in Narrative in English'). Juan Antonio Díaz López has the distinction, among the contributors to this volume, of being the only one who is an actual biographer of his subject: Gerald Brenan. He also has the distinction of being the first biographer of Brenan. He sheds light on how he came to write his biography, brings us up-to-date with the latest biographical work on Brenan and offers an analysis of his friend Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's monumental work, the first biography in English – and possibly the last, since it seems unsurpassable.

Margarita Carretero González probes the extent of the influence of Mallorca³ in the work of Robert Graves, as seen through the biographies. She has been in touch with the Graves family, who showed great interest in the project of the analysis and comparison of the biographies, especially since one of them was penned by a family member. The presence of Spain in Graves's work manifests itself more as part of the greater presence of the Mediterranean and its history. The Mediterranean past was muse and inspiration, and Graves found that his residence on the Balearic island, as opposed to Britain, combined with the influence of his current muse, his wife or lover, led to the articulation of great ideas.

Mauricio Aguilera is the contributor who has had the most complex task, due to the myriad works on Hemingway of different hues. He has deployed a series of tactics, a psychological approach, and a gender-based one, among others, to try to elucidate what Spain meant for him. Hemingway's accounts of the Spanish Civil War, too easily

3 In her essay, Margarita Carretero comments on the spellings of Mallorca/ Majorca and we take this opportunity to note that, while we have used the anglicised version for names of large towns like Seville and Malaga, smaller places such as Almuñécar and Alhaurín are rendered in the Spanish.

dismissed as a folkloric approach to bullfighting and the macho Spaniard translated to the political arena, reveal, through Aguilera's perusal of the different biographies, a geo-politically mistaken Hemingway, but at the same time, a man who responded to Spain's underlying instincts much more than any of the other writers here discussed, even if it was a response dictated by his childhood memories of the American landscape. As Aguilera shows, Hemingway was 'many-sided,' just as Laurie Lee was 'a many-coated man' and Gerald Brenan 'a many-roomed castle,' so Hemingway's role in the Spanish Civil War should not be reduced to a simple superficial reporting from the coordinates of a base in the best hotel and the local bars and bullrings, but should be seen on a wider scale, and encapsulated within his complex response to life.

Rosemary Masters has equally had to deploy considerable resources to fathom the depths of the complex personality that was George Orwell, displayed in the manifold works on his life. His own descriptions, manifestations, critical reactions and re-enactments of his experiences in Spain are seen in contradistinction to what others wrote of him. Of the six, he was the one who most placed his life in danger for Spain, and for what Spain, in its geo-political location of the thirties, meant in Europe and heralded for the world. His venture provided him with material and inspiration for many more books than he was able to write in the mere decade or so remaining to him after the end of the Civil War.

Mary Gleeson has been inspired to write on Stephen Spender, after having met him and his wife on their visit to Granada at the invitation of the British Council. Her work has been complicated by the fact that Spender admitted that everything he wrote was autobiographical, so his pronouncements and disavowals from an early age and throughout his long life have had to be contrasted with what others have said. And what others said has not always been to the satisfaction of Spender himself. Indeed, he was upset by an unauthorised biography to the point of having it prohibited. Gleeson's probing of his life through the latest biography reveals a writer who produced excellent work, mostly poetry, at the dramatic moment of the Civil War, but who steered his life away from Spain as a theme as other interests took over.

Celia Wallhead has also taken on a writer who is best known for works about both England and Spain which are largely autobiographical

in nature. Perhaps this is why his life has attracted fewer biographers. In fact, like Brennan, he is the subject of only one in-depth biography in English, and also like Brennan, its author is very sympathetic to the subject (both Brennan and Lee were very likeable and companionable, and great talkers), so the contrasting of what they assert in their autobiographical works and what the biographer has discovered is done in a tasteful way and not for the sensational laying-bare of untruths.

It is not surprising that the 'Turn to Ethics' of the last couple of decades of the twentieth century should have made itself felt also in the genre of life-writing. Michael Holroyd's definition is one which we have sought to apply in our study of the autobiographies and biographies of our chosen writers:

No serious biographer working this century will have failed to lay down some ethical foundations for his craft. I believe that the literary biographer can stretch out a hand to his subject and invite him, invite her, to write one more work, posthumously and in collaboration. Their chief business does not really lie in sensationalism but in attempting to chart illuminating connections between past and present, life and work – that is the biographer's aesthetic, that is his or her recreative process. Though it still has its uses as a reference work, biography is no longer a mere inventory of facts suspended between a chronology and some sources. We know the value of dreams and fantasies, the shadow of the life that isn't lived but lingers within people, and that the lies we tell are part of the truth we live (Holroyd 2002, 19).

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Chapter 1. Gerald Brenan (1894–1987)

Brief biography

- 1894 Born 'Edward Fitzgerald,' 7 April in Sliema, Malta. Travelled with the family to South Africa, England, Ireland, back to Malta, India and Ireland again.
- 1902 The family settles in Gloucestershire.
- 1903 Goes to school in Hampshire.
- 1908 Radley College, Oxfordshire.
- 1912 'Escapes' and travels through France, Italy and Dalmatia.
- 1914 Outbreak of First World War, Brenan is called up.
- 1919 After the War sets off for Spain, embarking in A Coruña.
- 1920 Settles in Yegen in the Alpujarras, Andalusia; receives visits from Ralph Partridge, Dora Carrington and Lytton Strachey.
- 1923 Leonard and Virginia Woolf visit.
- 1924 Returns to England.
- 1926 Travels to France.
- 1929 Returns to Yegen; trip to Seville.
- 1930 Returns to England again, joins Gamel Woolsey.
- 1931 Marries Gamel Woolsey in Rome and they return to England.
- 1933 Publishes *Jack Robinson. A Picaresque Novel* under the pseudonym of George Beaton.
- 1934 *Doctor Partridge's Almanack for 1935* by George Beaton; visits the sites connected to St John of the Cross; brief return to Yegen.
- 1935 Settles in new house in Churriana.
- 1936 Outbreak of Civil War in Spain; returns to England.
- 1939 End of Civil War.
- 1943 *The Spanish Labyrinth*.

- 1946 'Spanish Scene,' article in *Current Affairs Pamphlet*.
- 1947 Articles on St John of the Cross in *Horizon*.
- 1949 Tourist trip to Spain.
- 1950 *The Face of Spain*.
- 1951 Trip to Italy; *The Literature of the Spanish People*; visit to the United States.
- 1953 Return to Churriana.
- 1957 *South from Granada*.
- 1959 Visit to Morocco.
- 1961 Visit to Greece; *A Holiday by the Sea*.
- 1962 *A Life of One's Own*.
- 1966 Journeys through Tunisia, Algeria, Italy, France and England; *The Lighthouse Always Says Yes*.
- 1968 Death of Gamel Woolsey, 18 January; meets Lynda Nicholson-Price; moves to Alhaurín el Grande (Malaga); travels in Greece, Turkey and Italy.
- 1973 *St John of the Cross*.
- 1974 *Personal Record, 1920–1972*.
- 1977 *The Magnetic Moment. Poems*.
- 1978 *Thoughts in a Dry Season. A Miscellany*.
- 1982 Receives a popular homage in Yegen; awarded the CBE.
- 1983 Spanish TVE broadcast a programme on 'Brenan's Alpujarra'; named adopted son of Ugíjar (Granada).
- 1984 Popular homage in Alhaurín el Grande and other cultural acts in his honour and dedicated to his work, organised by the Diputación de Malaga; in May, Brenan is sent to an old people's home in London, from which he is 'rescued' by popular acclaim which mobilised the Andalusian and central government; returns to Alhaurín in June and the local Andalusian government sets up the Gerald Brenan Foundation.
- 1985 The Patronato or governing body which will take charge of the Foundation is set up; new editions of his work in Spanish translation: *El laberinto español*, *Historia de la literatura española* and *La Faz de España*, and translation of *Thoughts* as *Pensamientos en una estación seca*; publication of *Gerald Brenan. Al sur del laberinto (Litoral, Malaga)* by Eduardo Castro and Juan Antonio Díaz López.

- 1987 Dies on 19 January in Alhaurín el Grande; his body is deposited in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Malaga, to which it had been promised in 1981.
- 2001 His body is finally laid to rest beside that of Gamel Woolsey in the English Cemetery, Malaga.

Autobiographical works

Brenan wrote an account of his own life in two separate autobiographical works: *A Life of One's Own* (1962) and *Personal Record, 1920–1972* (1974). In addition to these, a large proportion of his earlier *South from Granada* (1957) is autobiographical. The first part, *A Life of One's Own*, covers his life from his birth in 1894 to 1919, the year in which he decides to reorient his life and settle in Spain. Thus the only reference to Spain in this work is the closing paragraph:

I have now told the story of my life down to the age of twenty-five. [...] Then I went to Spain. Here I was to find a house in a remote mountain village and spend, with brief intervals in England, five happy and industrious years (244).

Personal Record, 1920–1972, therefore, is the work in which he describes his life in Spain, where, apart from the odd trip abroad or back to England and the brief interlude (if only it had been briefer!) of the Civil War, in which he was repatriated to England, he remained until his death in 1987. He himself acknowledges his main objective in writing it: '[...] bringing order into my past experiences [...]', and secondly, and more important to us, as a challenge to loss of memory over time: 'Forgetfulness is the real death, for if there is anything that we save and hold up it is our memories' (11).

At the risk of anticipation, I would like to include here biographer Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's account of how Brennan wrote *A Life of One's Own*, with which he was so satisfied:

What is interesting is his way of writing it. He describes lying in bed or in a chair and letting his mind wander, noting down any memory that floats up. This

method of free association which, as tenuous memory jogged tenuous memory, is what it amounted to, is of course one of the classic ways therapists reach the unconscious. Gerald was, in effect, analysing himself and though he did not always make the connections, it also explains that phenomenon of juxtaposition which is sometimes so startling in *A Life...*, and which earlier proved so useful in suggesting clues to his complicated character (387, ellipsis in text).

In *Personal Record*, which he wrote between 1966 and 1968, he gives us a portrait of himself and recreates the literary personalities of the day, and above all, gives his personal opinion of Spain and Spaniards. Again to anticipate Gathorne-Hardy, his biographer was astounded with the speed with which he wrote it: 'He had reached Tiz by March, Toulon by April, polished off Carrington, Lily and Juliana during spring and summer, met Gamel by October and by December started the Civil War' (517). The opening sentence of *Personal Record* connects with the last one of *A Life of One's Own*, as it marks the new stage in his life heralded at the end of the first part: 'I moved into my house in Yegen on Jan. 13th, 1920. From this day a new life began for me' (13). Just as he had described Yegen and its environs in *South from Granada* as idyllic, a new Arcadia, here he continues to portray the village and its people as ideal for him and his needs, to the point that he feels at home:

Living there I got a taste and feeling for Spain I could not easily have obtained anywhere else. No doubt its isolation had some drawbacks, but I came to love this village and the country round it more than I have loved any other place and to feel in time that I belonged to it (19).

In this sparse but welcoming environment, he was able to dedicate himself to what he called the completion of his interrupted education, through the perusal and study of the two thousand books he had sent out there. But he was not always alone. His family, friends and loves parade before us with that frank lack of prudishness so often to be found in the best of British autobiography: Lytton Strachey, Ralph Partridge, Dora Carrington, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, E.M. Forster and Saxon Sydney Turner. His parents, his great-aunt Tiz, among others, appear like supporting actors in the life-story of Brennan.

About five years later, after this period of autodidactic study, he returned to England, firmly decided to be a writer. He read up on St

Teresa in the British Museum Reading Room and set about writing up the material in an attempt to create a style of his own: a paradoxical amalgam of simplicity, concision and the typically popular and the baroque.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Personal Record* is his description of the gestation of his books, from their conception up to their publication. We see that his intentions did not always turn out logically as he had planned. For example, a trip to France in 1926 to continue work on *St Teresa* and a novel he had started under the title of *A Holiday By The Sea* resulted in the completion of neither of these works (the latter was finished in 1959 and came out the following year) but in *Dr Partridge's Almanack for 1935*, for which he again used the pseudonym of George Beaton (the first time would be for *Jack Robinson. A Picaresque Novel*, 1933, inspired by his reading of the Spanish Golden Age picaresque).

On his return to Yegen in 1929, he began an amorous relationship with a local girl, Juliana, with whom he had a daughter, Elena, later called Miranda Helen. The way he describes it makes it sound more as if he has fallen in love with Spain itself or the collective womenfolk of Spain:

To my mind at least they stood for rural Spain, for that untutored life of the *pueblos* in which I wished to sink myself, so that in making love to one of those girls I would be drawing closer to what I most admired and loved in this country (210).

This was one of Brennan's 'erotic performances' and there was no sense of equality in the relationship. He saw himself in the dominant role in the master-servant relation in the style of his predecessor in Spain, George Borrow, or, indeed, in a literary sense, of Professor Higgins teaching Eliza Doolittle in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. But unlike *Pygmalion*, there was no miraculous transformation, so this relationship did not prosper. Upon the death of his great-aunt Tiz in 1930, he returned to England to take possession of a considerable inheritance.

There he met an American poet from South Carolina, Gamel Woolsey, whom he married in an unorthodox ceremony in Rome. She adopted his surname, and they both went to Yegen and adopted his daughter. No sooner had they found a house to their satisfaction in Churriana, Malaga, a move we assume was motivated by a need to

avoid Juliana and her family in Yegen, than the general situation began to deteriorate:

The chaotic state of Spain, the continual strikes and the severe unemployment had caused a fall in the value of landed property. [...] But the political situation in Spain soon began to look threatening and the little Eden we had built for ourselves seemed far from assured (257 & 267).

In Chapter 21, 'The Approach of the Civil War,' Brennan records his return to England, a stay which would be prolonged for the duration of the Civil War and the Second World War. He was not to return to Spain until 1949. He explains his work for the BBC, broadcasting in Spanish, and his research on the reasons for Spain's slide into civil war, which would culminate in perhaps his best work, *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1946).

Like most of the British and American volunteers who participated in the Civil War, Brennan was a supporter of the legitimate status quo, the government of the Republic. However, he recognised the failures to sustain social order, often caused by its anticlerical posture. The phrase that defines his attitude is: 'I believed in moderation and patience' (275), two virtues which were precisely at the time lacking in Spain. The triumph of the Popular Front divided the country into two irreconcilable halves. Before he left Spain, and perhaps because he had been living in small Andalusian villages, he had come to sympathise with the working class:

The look of triumph on the faces of the workmen was sometimes very striking [...] Although certain sinister and ragged figures, the dregs of the unemployed, could be seen lurking in the shadows, the workers when their day of victory came, did not intend to injure their class enemies (277).

He himself was not of the working class – his great-aunt Tiz was Baroness von Roeder – and perhaps his lack of what today we would call being politically correct comes through in his choice of words like 'dregs,' 'sinister,' and 'lurking.' When he describes the unemployed with such epithets, one wonders how he could be so sure they would not be more vengeful on the upper and middle classes when what he saw as their inevitable moment of triumph came. He tells us that he

had made a number of friends among the leading Anarchists and, ever the idealist, it was this faction that he most admired and respected: 'Anarchists are the only revolutionaries who do not promise a rise in the standard of living. They offer a moral gain – self-respect and freedom' (278). Many of the middle class were nostalgic about the stability and progress enjoyed during the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera,¹ as someone commented to Brenan: 'We Spaniards, he said, are not like you English, wise and prudent. We are a bad, violent race and we need a strong hand over us' (283). The strong hand was often motivated by the simple desire for power, as Brenan shows us in his personal view of General Queipo de Llano:

He had been a Republican since the fall of the Monarchy, had sworn allegiance to the Government, which had trusted him – and then broken his oath and betrayed them. Such are the people who come to the front in civil wars and revolutions, where ambition conquers every other feeling (298).

Brenan coincides with George Orwell in his *Homage to Catalonia* as regards the organisation of the resistance to Franco's coup d'état. He describes how the different parties of the Left were not only disorganised but split into warring factions. Adding to this a lack of preparation and discipline, the result was a total lack of efficacy against the rebels.

Seeing how Churriana, a microcosm of the entire country, is being torn apart, Brenan makes a personal plea for moderation to avoid bloodshed:

I am an English liberal and hate all bloodshed and revolution. I believe that we should aim at changing social conditions gradually with as little use of force as possible. Given a few more years, scientific invention will enable us to abolish poverty and perhaps wealth as well. But now that it has come to revolution and by the fault of the people on the other side, I hope that you will succeed in your plans and establish libertarian communism. Only I am certain that you will never do it if you kill too many people, because blood calls for blood. You must re-educate your enemies not destroy them (304).

1 It has recently been suggested that Federico García Lorca was of this opinion, a view that has been received with incredulity.

Brenan sympathised with the proletariat but had little faith in their ability to organise themselves or the country: 'My feelings, if not always my judgement, were well to the left. This meant that I should have to take sides with the working classes who were being so cruelly handled even though I had no faith in their blueprints for the future' (125). In Malaga, Brenan made contact with two compatriots who also wrote works related to the Civil War: Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, who wrote *My House in Malaga* (1938) and Hugh Slater, war correspondent and author of one of the best novels on the war, according to Brenan, *The Heretics* (1948).² Their sympathies contrast with the allegiances with the insurgents of other compatriots Brenan met in Gibraltar as they waited to be evacuated:

Perhaps this was natural, for in colonial life class feeling is very strong and, as the spirit of Munich was already in the air, the Nationalists' admiration for Nazi Germany and their openly proclaimed contempt for the democratic nations passed unregarded (316).

Brenan deplored the facility with which such people believed word for word the descriptions of the atrocities supposedly committed by the Reds or republicans. As a correspondent for the Manchester *Guardian* and later *The News Chronicle*, he also deplored the fact that such morbosity sold newspapers back home.

In England, the war in Spain was seen as a clash between Fascism and democratic Socialism, but Brenan disagreed that it was a dress rehearsal for a larger war:

To my mind this was a purely Spanish affair, to be seen in terms of Peninsular rather than European History, but intensified and distorted by the existence of two great power-dynamos, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, which operated from outside. What shocked and horrified me was the hatred and fanaticism that was tearing to pieces a country that I loved, so, though I gave my full support to the Government cause, I should have been only too pleased had it been possible for the contesting sides to come to terms (321).

2 See my article 'Testimonios literarios ingleses de la Guerra Civil en Andalucía' in *La Guerra Civil en Andalucía oriental 1936-1939*. Granada 1986.

When he was proved wrong, and the larger war broke out, at the age of forty-five, and a veteran of the First World War, Brenan joined the Home Guard, working on two fronts: as a night watchman during the air raids, and in the service of the BBC, transmitting bulletins to Spain. Independently of this, he continued work on *The Spanish Labyrinth*, completing it in 1943, even before the World War had ended. Just as he wrote his memoirs to 'bring order into [his] past experiences,' he wrote *The Spanish Labyrinth* to complete his education on Spanish history and set his ideas straight on the reasons for the conflict. He admits to having been much encouraged in this work by Franz von Borkenau and his *The Spanish Cockpit*, which came out in the course of the war – 1937. He was equally encouraged by another friend, this time a compatriot, who also wrote on Spain: V.S. Pritchett, whose classic *The Spanish Temper* was published in 1954.

Obviously, the thirty years or so after the war covered by *Personal Record* are not so dramatic. Brenan tells us of his research for and writing of *The Face of Spain* (1950) and *The Literature of the Spanish People* (1951), which were to become literary and financial successes. He traces the financial recovery of the country itself, as, again resident in Malaga in the early 1950s, he witnessed a slow recuperation, thanks to an incipient tourist industry and rather lukewarm American aid (Spain's neutrality in the Second World War excluded her from benefitting from the Marshall Plan as other parts of Europe had done). *South from Granada*, another financial success, details the new Spain of twenty years of Franco's rule, and places Brenan in a line of successful British and American travel writers.

Not all of his writing was a success story. He had earlier abandoned a novel he had called *Segismundo*; and *The Lighthouse Always Says Yes*, which did see the light of day in 1965, was a complete failure too (though with that title, what can one expect?)

His relations with Gamel Woolsey naturally occupy an important place in his memoirs, and he confesses that he was not always faithful to her. On her death in 1968 after a long illness, he almost immediately invited a much younger woman to move in with him in a new house in Alhaurín el Grande, Lynda Nicholson-Price: 'An English girl of twenty four who had a strong feeling for poetry and very great desire to study literature and philosophy' (372).

His last success was being finally able to put in the last full stop in his work on the Spanish mystics and publish *St John of the Cross* (1973). After that, his publications were of poetry, *The Magnetic Moment* and meditations and aphorisms, *Thoughts in a Dry Season* (1978), with unfinished work on Spanish popular songs. As he says in *Personal Record* (528), he had published eleven books since 1932, five of them on Spanish subjects. Perhaps he was not satisfied with that: 'But it is the fate of all writers to regret the books they have not written or have begun to write when it was too late' (*Thoughts* viii). But then he was naturally modest: 'When I read a page that reads badly I know that it is myself who has written it. When it reads well it has come through somewhere else' (*ibid.* 116).

In *Thoughts* there is a phrase which I think sums up the final balance of a life dedicated to writing and which has, in spite of his modesty, turned out to be spectacularly successful: 'Old age takes away from us what we have inherited and gives us what we have earned' (13). What Brenan earned has been recognised both by the critics and by the book-sellers, and also on a higher dimension, by a whole country, his adopted home: Spain.

The biographies

There is really only one work on Brenan which fully fits the generic category of biography, and that is Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's *A Life of Gerald Brenan: The Interior Castle* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992). I will deal with it in depth after I have discussed the other works that have biographical components. The first book to take on the biography of Gerald Brenan was my own *Gerald Brenan: Hispanista Angloandaluz*, which, after a considerable delay, for I finished it in 1983, I published in the year in which Brenan died, 1987. A much more recent work, which benefits from Gathorne-Hardy's, is *Buscando a Gerald Brenan en el sur (Seis cartas a Gerald Brenan) (In Search of Gerald Brenan in the South: Six Letters to Gerald Brenan)*

written and published privately by Ramón Fernández Palmeral in 2007.

Juan Antonio Díaz López, Gerald Brenan: Hispanista Angloandaluz. Granada. Ediciones TAT, 1987 (Colección Andaluzea número cero)

In his prologue to this book, my friend and colleague, Eduardo Castro, friend of 'Don Gerardo' himself, pointed out the need to rescue the work of Gerald Brenan, which in the years leading up to his death, had rather fallen out of the public view. My book, and part of my earlier doctoral thesis, was dedicated to this purpose. Who am I to sum up my own work? Eduardo Castro admits that I cannot hide 'un cierto tono admirativo y casi laudatorio' ('a certain admiring, even laudatory tone') (10) and I am not ashamed of this admiration for my subject. But I tried to be objective and am thankful that Castro also found in my work 'el rigor del trabajo bien hecho' ('the rigour of a job well done') (*ibid.*).

I set out my objectives in my Introduction: 'Gerald Brenan: El Hispanismo hecho pasión' ('Gerald Brenan: Hispanism as passion') (13). I wanted my work to be a study-guide for reading Brenan's works on Spain rather than my own personal analysis of his life or writings. I call for curiosity and sympathy on the part of the readers and aim to guide them 'without intermediaries' (*ibid.*) towards the magical poetry of *South from Granada* and the lessons on Spain's immediate past in *The Spanish Labyrinth* or *The Face of Spain*, all available now in Spanish translation. Brenan deserves to be read because his passion for Spain gave him a dedicated interest in the subject of its most recent history, but his condition of being a foreigner granted him – or at least, he always sought – sufficient distance to be objective. He did not go to university, but he is now studied in universities not only in Britain and Spain, but throughout the world, as an authority on the subject.

I structured the work in five thematic sections around the chronology of Brenan's publications. But I begin with a biographical and bibliographical outline (21–36), which is my contribution to Brenan's biography and to which I will return in a moment. The first thematic

section is his political-historical work in *The Spanish Labyrinth* and *Spanish Scene* (41–65); the second is on his anthropological work in his travel-writing: *The Face of Spain* and *South from Granada* (69–96); thirdly, his study of Spanish literature in *The Literature of the Spanish People* and *St John of the Cross* (99–123); fourthly, his ‘Spanish autobiography’ in the form of *Personal Record 1920–1972* (127–146); and finally, his last work, *Thoughts in a Dry Season. A Miscellany* (149–161). In this work, Brenan gives his thoughts on Spain and tells of his favourite writers, amongst whom we inevitably find Cervantes and Rimbaud, as well as the most important Romantics and Modernists. His friend V.S. Pritchett says that Brenan’s idiosyncrasy comes through most clearly in *Thoughts*:

He is an egoist, a performer, who invites one into the open air of his fantasies and insights. He is one of the excited conversationalists who at once defines and transforms the people, places and ideas that have set him off. If he is an encyclopaedia, it is an encyclopaedia that has wings. I have often wished I could transcribe his manner of conversation, his sudden darts into some preposterous item of sexual news, his pleasant malice, the jokes that enliven the quirks of learning and his powers of generalization, but the thing escapes me. But now in the epigrams and discursive entries in this book, I hear his voice (See Pritchett).

I end my book with four important addenda: firstly, since Brenan died before it saw the light of day, I have made a dedication to him, addressing him in the second person familiar, ‘tú’: ‘Gerald Brenan (1894–1987). In memoriam’ (177–180). Secondly, with the culmination of a full life, we can now write the chronology of Brenan from beginning to end (183–185). Thirdly, I have included the transcript of a questionnaire Brenan was kind enough to answer (by hand) in December 1979 (189–195).

I will dwell on this questionnaire for a moment. When asked if the different places in Spain in which he had resided (Yegen, Churriana, Alhaurín el Grande) had exerted any influence on what he had written on Spain and its people, he admitted that they must have. His close acquaintance with the country people of Granada and Malaga had given him a knowledge he could not have acquired from the ‘many thousands of books on Spanish history, geography and literature’ (191) that he had read. When asked his opinion on who was the

English writer who had written most objectively on Spain, its people and history and especially the Civil War, he answered Hugh Thomas. Thomas told him he had begun his book on the Civil War after reading *The Spanish Labyrinth*. Brenan said he was also of the opinion that Borkenau's *The Spanish Cockpit*, in spite of having been penned in haste before the war was over, had not dated or lost its authority. Borkenau had been well-prepared to write such a work, he was the first one to understand the Civil War and Brenan learned much from him (194). Brenan did the research for *The Spanish Labyrinth* because he did not know enough about Spain, and another English resident of Spain who 'knew nothing about Spain,' according to Brenan, was Laurie Lee (*ibid.*) Brenan said Lee was a good writer and his books are admirable, but his knowledge of Spain is far inferior to that of Pritchett: '*The Spanish Temper* is one of the very best books ever written by an Englishman on Spain' (*ibid.*). My own work, *Imagen de España a través de los escritores ingleses contemporáneos* (*Image of Spain in the Eyes of Contemporary English Writers*) puts forward the hypothesis that the three writers who project the most complete and least distorted view of Spain are George Orwell, Laurie Lee and Brenan himself. The first of these was an active militant, offering a political chronicle of the war seen from the inside; the second fits onto the end of the line of nineteenth-century English travel-writers who visited and wrote on Spain; while I see Brenan as a sort of synthesis of the two, but at the same time a contradiction, as he did not participate in the Civil War and he was a resident more than a traveller. He grew into a Spaniard and came to know the country and its people intimately. Brenan agreed with my views but was reluctant to offer any opinion of his own role and merits. He was also rather pessimistic about the interest of his countrymen in Spain: 'They come for their holidays because it is cheap and there is plenty of sunshine and wine, but they live in England' (195).

To go back to my final addendum, I have ended my book with a chronological bibliography of all Brenan's major writings (199–202). And last but not least, the artist in me has led me to use in the edition of the book manipulations of three photographs of Brenan. At the beginning there is a fairly orthodox head and shoulders portrait of him aged about sixty-five wearing a beret. But this small photo is superim-

posed on a larger one that has been enlarged to the point of differentiating each dot in the printing, as if one were looking at him with a magnifying glass. A second photo is a full-length one of him striding along, an energetic and smiling old man. I record (153) that he had written in *Thoughts*: 'a work of art is a sort of dynamo that gives out energy' (62). This shot of him I have cut up in laminations on the front cover to show him walking in different directions, as if to reveal a polyfacetic nature, or at least, the bifurcation of his life as an Englishman dedicated to Spain. A similar full-length photo of him, hand on hip, laughing merrily, his other hand resting on the door of his house in Spain, is used to 'fade in' in three steps at the beginning of the book, from almost imperceptible, legs first, to the complete portrait. At the end, I have taken the striding portrait, and in five takes that gradually fade away, Brennan has stridden away from us, as if in five paces.

To come back to my biographical-bibliographical section, I point out the need for it, since no global study of his work, Spanish or otherwise, had been made before then. I therefore used it to trace the gestation and appearance of his works, as he had done in his autobiographies, but with objective commentary. For it is a life that has been dominated less by action, apart from his participation in the First World War, than by the writing.

Brenan sought definitions of Spain, he dedicated his life to studying its many facets and disseminating information and arousing interest in the subject. So I start my study of his life with definitions, one in Spanish from the *Diccionario de literatura española* and another in English from *The Oxford Companion to Spanish Literature*. The first describes his books on Spain as spontaneous and important (Bleiberg 121), though its classification of *South from Granada* as travel writing is questionable. The second includes a harsh criticism of *The Literature of the Spanish People* by B.W. Wardropper as 'a work of persuasion, a vigorous personal account of Spanish literature, [but] a dangerous tool for students, and an inappropriate one for scholars.'³ But it is

3 From *Modern Language Notes* 1952, 345–6. Perhaps the late Professor Wardropper felt scholars should only read the work of professional hispanists