Ezra Pound and the Spanish World

Viorica Patea, John Gery, and Walter Baumann, eds.

Reseñada por

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In the spring of 1906, the American poet Ezra Pound (1885–1972) spent a month in the library of the Royal Palace in Madrid, reading Lope de Vega for a dissertation he would never complete. Yet Lope's theater, whose language had to be grasped at first hearing, helped shape the criterion he stated in a January 1915 letter to Harriet Monroe, founder and editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*: poetry must be "as well written as prose" and contain "nothing—nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance, in the stress of some emotion, actually say" (*The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, ed. D. D. Paige, 1950, 48–49). The formula opens onto an older Spanish debate: how close can verse come to ordinary speech without ceasing to be poetry?

That two-way intellectual traffic is one of the central subjects of *Ezra Pound and the Spanish World*, a collective volume published by Clemson University Press in its Ezra Pound Center for Literature series. Edited by professors Viorica Patea (Universidad de Salamanca), John Gery (University of New Orleans), and Walter Baumann (emeritus, Ulster University), it places Hispanic and Anglo-American studies in a long-overdue conversation: eighteen chapters by twenty contributors form Part One, while eight sets of primary materials follow in Part Two. The essays range from the classics and *The Cantos* through modernist networks to their later afterlives. Earlier studies had recovered separate strands: Concha Zardoya's pioneering essay (1953), Gerd Schmidt's Medinaceli note (1986), and work by Gayle Rogers and Marianna Cherchi (both 2016). Patea and Gery's bilingual anthology *"Song Up Out of Spain": Poems in Tribute to Ezra Pound* (2023) had also gathered responses from Spanish poets. Nonetheless, the present volume is the first collective study to place Pound's Spanish formation and his reception in Spanish-language literature within a single critical and documentary frame.

Patea's richly documented introduction—which describes Spain as "Pound's first love" (5)—supplies the biographical spine: his abandoned thesis, his later disenchantment, and the monument erected in the town of Medinaceli in 1973. The opening studies expand that genealogy. Maria Luisa Ardizzone recovers Averroes within Pound's alternative intellectual history, while Giuliana Ferreccio traces his morphology of dawn from the *Cid*—an image that illustrates the volume's cover—onward. Spain emerges here as a source of intellectual lineages, verbal forms, and visual procedures.

These tensions come into their sharpest focus in the chapters on Lope and Quevedo. Natalia Carbajosa reads *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) through Pound's translations, showing how meter and rhyme yield when they obstruct the simplest expression. Paula Barba Guerrero, conversely, examines the cost of that preference in Pound's 1921 Quevedo essay: where seventeenth-century verse becomes "a diffused manner of utterance," and full rhyme bends sense to the line; for Pound, Quevedo's prose survives whereas his poetry is consigned to Petrarchan decline. Together, these essays reveal this criterion as both instrument and blind spot. They also expose a historical convergence that the book leaves unnamed. Pound's 1915 maxim can be juxtaposed with Ramón de Campoamor's *Poética* (1883), which defines poetry as the rhythmic representation of thought through an image, expressed with a naturalness and brevity unavailable to prose. Spanish criticism had long debated *prosaísmo*—the incorporation into verse of ordinary diction, everyday subject matter, and rhetorical techniques associated with prose. Pound found one answer in the *Cid* and Lope; these values later returned to Juan Ramón Jiménez and the *novísimos* by way of Imagism. For scholars of twentieth-century Spanish poetry, this reciprocal history stands as the collection's richest line of inquiry.

The five chapters on *The Cantos* trace sources as they become poetic acts. Stephen Wilson gives the title's "Spanish world" an expanded Iberian reach by rereading Camões; J. Rhett Forman uncovers Menippean satire and the carnivalesque in Canto 74; Yoshiko Kita finds revealing parallels between Lope and Noh drama; Caterina Ricciardi tracks Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832) into the Pisan sequence; and John Gery derives a poetics of the glimpse from the Prado Museum and the Velázquez remembered in Canto 80. Across these essays, Iberian sources translate into Pound's poetic practice.

The inquiry then widens to modernist networks. Miriam Borham-Puyal reconstructs Pound's 1920 invitations to Unamuno to contribute to *The Dial* from unpublished Salamanca materials. Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan brings Juan Ramón and Imagism together around the exact word, everyday life, and prose translation, showing how partial misreading became an act of poetic selection. Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec places Pound beside Nancy Cunard and Langston Hughes during the Spanish Civil War, weighing his internationalism against his fascism, while Massimo Bacigalupo links him to Hemingway and Juan Ramón Masoliver through "Mediterranean sanity." Influence takes shape through choice, resistance, and transformation.

Pound's afterlives likewise extend through fiction, poetry, and translation. Emanuele Zoppellari Perale traces the poet's symbolic presence throughout Roberto Bolaño's novels; Melania Stancu reads Antonio Colinas's *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975) via the ideogrammic method; and Leonor María Martínez Serrano compares José Vázquez Amaral's *Cantares completos* (1975)—the first complete translation of *The Cantos* into any foreign language—

with Jan de Jager's 2018 version. A dedication honors Javier Coy, whose three Cátedra volumes (1994, 1996, and 2000) made Vázquez Amaral's text the chief scholarly point of entry in Spain, while three closing memoirs lend this history a first-person authority: Colinas finds traces of Pound in his own poetry; Jaime Siles recalls learning brevity, imagistic lucidity, and linguistic economy from Pound; and Luis Alberto de Cuenca writes that Pound gave him "access to literary creation" (286), a debt clearly visible in *Los retratos* (1971).

Part Two may prove to be the work's most durable contribution. It gathers the 1906 letters and postcards to Pound's friend Viola Baxter—now held in Yale's Beinecke Library—along with petitions to consult the Palacio Real manuscripts, "Burgos: A Dream City of Old Castile," the Quevedo essay, Pound's letter to Vázquez Amaral and Vázquez Amaral's articles, and the correspondence with Juan Ramón and Zenobia Camprubí. While the recurring focus on 1906 and an uneven engagement with Spanish-language scholarship remain minor reservations, they are far outweighed by the range and documentary care of the whole.

Pound went to Spain for a doctorate he never completed. More than a century later, this collection grants that unfinished project an afterlife by tracing what truly became of it. The *Cid*, Lope, and the Prado take their place in his poetics; Juan Ramón, the translators, and the *novísimos* reveal how that poetics was recast in twentieth-century Spanish poetry. What the preface calls a "nearly blank" (xv) space emerges, by the final page, as a history of reciprocal transformation—a poetic legacy that belongs fully to both traditions. Bringing this dimension of Pound into view is the volume's greatest achievement.