

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND ZENOBIA CAMPRUBI AYMAR AND JUAN RAMON JIMÉNEZ

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Between 1915 and 1922 Zenobia Camprubi Aymar, wife of the Nobel laureate poet Juan Ramón Jiménez and considered one of the most important poets in Spanish, translated more than twenty books by Rabindranath Tagore from English to Spanish. Thanks to her English knowledge, she translated the main piece and her husband added a poetic touch. Also, he included one of his poems at the beginning of most of the translated books, poems related to Tagore or some of the characters in his books. Thanks to these wonderful works, selling out still today in different Spanish and Argentinian editions, the newspaper El Sol (The Sun) revealed in 1927 that Tagore was, after the French Anatole France, one of the preferred foreign writers for the Spanish readers.

Zenobia Translates, Poetically Jimenez Improving

For this reason, in the 1930s, Juan Ramón Jiménez decides to revise the previous translations, which are published again with a great success. In 1955, the complete works are published in one volume called **Obra escogida** (Selected work).

The projection of the Bengali writer in the Hispanic world is mainly due to the important translation work, edition and spreading carried out by the couple Zenobia-Juan Ramón. However, it is true that before they spread Tagore in Spain, Vicente Risco from Ourense delivered a speech in November 1913 at the Ateneo in Madrid, and translated a few Tagore poems into Galician so as to publish them in some Galician magazines of the time. The Galician Antonio Villar Ponte published an article about the Bengali poet in the frontpage of the newspaper La Voz de Galicia in December 1913. Also, the writer from Asturias Ramon Perez de Ayala published several poems from Gitanjali in the newspaper La Tribuna from Madrid, on 23rd and 29th August 1913. Later on, Maria Lejarraga, publishes the translation of three poems taken from La



Rabindranath Tagore

Luna Creciente (The Crescent Moon/Sissu) in Blanco y Negro magazine on 15th August 1915.

Nevertheless, the work of Zenobia and Jimenez, who had signed a contract with McMillan from London to

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translate Tagore's books, was essential and Significant to achieve a very important literary presence of Tagore in Spain and Latin America. Their influence was obvious in Spanish writers from the Generation of 27 and in other Literature Nobel Prize winners like Chilean Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda.

Zenobia and Juan Ramón Jiménez got married in New York on 2nd March 1916. Long before that, she had read Tagore through the English editions and when she read Juan Ramón's poems -before meeting each other- she decides to translate some Tagore poems certain about the poetic similarity between both poets. It seems clear that Zenobia wanted to show her fiancé the writings of Rabindranath. Juan Ramón was hugely impressed by the texts of the Bengali poet and insisted that they must be published. He was in charge of polish up the translation, adapting it to a closer poetic style. As a result, already in August 1915, the book *La Luna Nueva* (The Crescent Moon/Sissu) comes to light, being the first collaboration between both of them, still engaged. This cooperation will continue in the following years, due to the important success of the first book that was sold out quickly.



Zenobia Camprubi Aymar

Tagore's Editions in Spanish

Thanks to the contract signed to McMillan in London, the first editions came out: *EI Jardinero* (The Gardener/Mali) (1917), *EI cartero del rey* (The Post Office/Dakghor) (1917), *Pajaros perdidos* (Stray Birds) (1917), *Ofrenda lirica* (Gitanjali) (1918), *La Cosecha* (Fruit-Gathering) (1918), *Malini* (1918), *EI asceta* (The ascetic/Sanyasi) (1918) and also in the same year: *Ciclo de la*

primavera (Falguni), *Chitra*, *Sacrificio* (Visorjon). *Mashi*, *EI rey del salón oscuro* (The king of the dark chamber/Raja). *EI rey y la reina* (Raja o Rani), *Tránsito* (Crossing), *Las piedras hambrientas y otros cuentos* (Hungry Stones and other stories), *Regalo de amante* and *Morada de paz* (Shantiniketan). In 1964 the first edition of *EI naufragio* (The Wreck/Noukadubi) is published and earlier on 1961, *Recuerdos* (My Reminiscences/Jivan Smriti). In 1968, *EI sentido de la vida -Nacionalismo* and in 1965 *Entrevisiones de Bengala* (Glimpses of Bengal). These last translations were left by Zenobia before her death.

Juan Ramón Jiménez, who had an extraordinary sensitivity, felt upset when he was told that his poetry was greatly influenced by Tagore. He used to argue that he did not know Tagore's work when he was publishing important works such as *Platero y yo* and the series of *Elegias*. *Olvidanzas*, *Baladas de Primavera*, *La soledad sonora*, *Poemas magicos y dolientes* and *Melancolias*, between the years 1908 and 1912.

Tagore's Influence on Jimenez

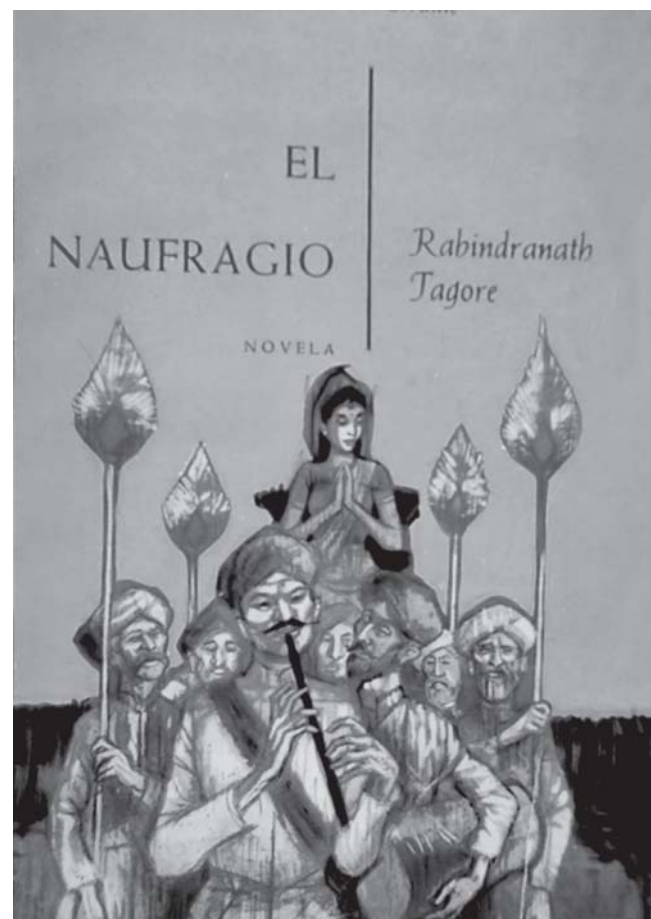
However, in spite of his reticence to accept the Tagorean influence, after the translation by Zenobia, Juan Ramón, possibly unconsciously, was assimilating some poetic elements in his own poetry. This happens, more specifically, when the poet from Moguer starts a new stage of his literary creation in 1916, usually called the naked poetry. According to the letters that Zenobia wrote to Tagore checked in the Rabindra-Bhavan files, and for the five short poems dedicated to Tagore, recently discovered, we could think that the poet was a constant source of inspiration from that moment, even when he was reluctant to mention the name of Tagore. During his last years in Puerto Rico, Jimenez expresses in a typed document the true joy that Tagore's works and states that he has been one of the most important sources of his writing. For this reason, the insistence for a long time to not to mention Tagore as his influence and inspiration is more apparent than real. Had it not been like that, many things would have not been understood: the ten lyric texts written by Juan Ramón Jimenez at the beginning of many Tagore books with the titles of "AI niño indio de *La Luna Nueva*" (To the Indian boy of The Crescent Moon), "AI jardinero" (To the gardener), "A Rabindranath Tagore" (To R. Tagore), *Cogedla, que no se os vayan* (Take her, you will not), *Canción a Arnal muerto* (Song to Amal dead), *Canción de Vasanti Inmortal* (Song of Vasanti Immortal), "AI rey Vikram" (To the King Vikram), "AI amor" (To love), "Fina red de los sentimientos del poeta" (Fine network of the poets feelings) and "Ceniza de Rabindranath Tagore"

(R. Tagore's Ash). This last poem written in 1949, eight years after Tagore's death, was published at the beginning of *Obra Escogida* (Selected work) and cited earlier. It could neither be explained that in a letter in 1915, Jimenez says to Maria Martos that Robindronath is an extraordinary and genuine poet and Zenobia, in another letter addressed to Tagore in 1919 says: "I think you can understand how you have been a constant spiritual partner since the moment that we started reading you five years ago. It has been a wonderful company and it seems that you have affected all our things".

So as to understand the real compenetration between Tagorean poetry and Juan Ramón, there is nothing clearer than reading the poem that Juan Ramón wrote in 1949. This poem, entitled "Rabindranalh Tagore's Ash" comments on itself and says: *"When I was one day at the beach I know, I took with my own hand the foam of a wave I liked, one as fresh as mother-of-pearl ash, that remained on my hand palm. Not knowing why, an idea suddenly became a word, a safe word, natural; and I said out loud 'it is Tagore's ash'. Why did I say that? You heard it. And you saw in my palm that ash foam that won't go away, that twinkled as if it were alive. The Ganges took to the sea all the precious Tagore's life, already in ashes from his body's burning. And the poet joined the world in ashes through the sea. In the sea of the world those Tagore's ashes remain. Why could not those ashes come to my hand that help to shape our Spanish at the mythm of his immense heart?"*.

Robindronath The Success of The Hispanic World

The Indian hispanist, Shamu Ganguly, teacher of Spanish Language and Literature at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, wrote *"Recordando a Tagore"* (*Remembering Tagore*) published in *Culturas*, a supplement of the Galician newspaper *Diario 16* (no.311 , 14 July 1991, pp.4-5). In this interesting article, Dr. Ganguly makes a detailed review of Tagore's relationship with the Hispanic world. Naturally, the article focuses mostly on the relationship of Tagore with the couple formed by Zenobia Camprubi and Juan Ramón Jimenez an excellent Spanish poet who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1956. Thanks to them, Tagore was and is still read in Spain and Latin America. Camprubi was fluent in English and translated most of the works originally published by Macmillan. Jimenez made the poetic corrections of his wife's translations; she gradually improved the accuracy of her translations.



Noukadubi (the Wreck)
Tr. by Zenobia Camprubi Aymar

In gathering data for my PhD dissertation about Tagore as an educator. I had to consult the documents and personal files in Juan Ramón Jimenez's collection, which is well-kept in the National Historical Archive in Madrid. In a bundle of documents dealing with the relationship between this couple and Tagore, one can see the manuscripts, the translations, the letter and, interestingly, the program, thoroughly designed by Juan Ramón, for Tagore's planned visit to Spain for April 1921, a visit which never took place. Among the manuscripts, you can find Camprubi's unpublished translation of Ernest Rhys's biography of Tagore.

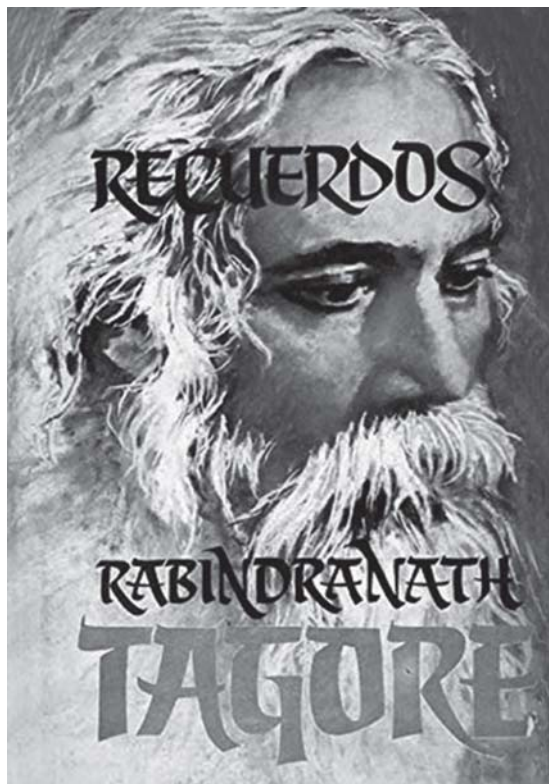
Together they translated twenty of Tagore's books dealing with poetry, theatre, stories, aphorisms and education. The editions of these books have been numerous first, the ones published in Spain during the 1920's and 1930's then, after the Spanish Civil War, the ones published in Argentina by Losada Publishing House (which no longer exists); and then again in Spain during the 1980's and 1990's by Alianza Editorial and Edaf Publishing Houses. Most of the books translated by

Camprubi contain splendid poems written by Jimenez in the introductions and dedicated to Tagore or the characters in the texts. Many translations of other Tagorian texts by Camprubi were planned however, in the end, some were not translated or, if so, not published.

According to Shamu Ganguly, thanks to the Spanish couple's translations - considered by Tagore as the best in any language-, Tagore's work is still being read in Spain and Latin America. Dr. Ganguly adds : "*Spain appears to be the only country in Europe where consecutive generations of readers have maintained a continuous Interest in him. (...) The translation of the Indian poet's works explains his presence in the Hispanic world*".

It should be mentioned also that the translations by Camprubi and Jimenez had a great influence on the "Generation of 1927" a group well-known intellectuals and writers such as Rafael Alberti, Federico Garcia Lorca. Vicente Aleixandre (1977 Nobel Prize winner); and by extension on Latin American writers such as Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda (both Nobel Prize winners. 1945 and 1971, respectively).

Several editions in the 1930's by Camprubi and Jimenez were chosen by the Ministry of Education during the II Republic regime in Spain to stock up school libraries all over Spain. Some of the titles requested were: *Santiniketan*,



Jibonsmriti (My Reminiscences)
Tr. by Zenobia Camprubi Aymar

The Crescent Moon, The Gardener, Song Offering and The Post Office. In those years they were published by Signo, a Madrid Publishing House and were distributed by the Society for Pedagogical Missions. These books were shipped to both school libraries and people's libraries, many of them created during the fruitful period of the Republic (1931-1936).

Tagore's Failed Trip to Spain

In this book *My Reminiscences*, Tagore makes an affectionate portrait of the only teacher he remembers well, the Spanish Jesuit Penaranda of the Saint Xavier School in Calcutta.

Although Tagore was a tireless and had gone all-around the world, he, against his wishes, never came to Spain. The imaginary trip programmed in detail by Juan Ramón Jimenez for April 1921. Tagore was supposed to have visited Madrid, Toledo and Andalucia, especially Moguer, Jimenez's home-town (nowadays his house is a Museum and Foundation named after him). It was a pity the visit did not come about.

As I have pointed out earlier, I researched J.R. Jimenez's well-kept collection at the National Historical Archive in Madrid. Among the original manuscripts, I found the program of Tagore's visit thoroughly planned welcome ceremonies, activities, trips, banquet schedules with sitting arrangements-, and also the design of the program for the printer.

It is worth mentioning, for example, the party in his honour at the *ILE* Residence Hall. Zenobia Camprubi and Jimena Menendez Pidal were supposed to read Tagore's poems in Spanish, Elena Royo had to read the story *Mashi*, Federico Garcia Lorca, Rubio, Luis Buñuel, Adolfo Salazar, Carmen Huder, Salvador Dali. Carmen de Juan, among other *ILE* members, were to stage the dramatic poem *Sacrifice*. Tagore and Juan Ramón Jimenez were to read poems in Bengali and in Spanish.

I also found the hand-written letter Tagore sent to Camprubi from Geneva (Switzerland), dated 5 April 1921, apologizing for not coming. The letter in English is quoted verbatim and says the following.

Dear Madame Jimenez,

I can not tell you how sorry I am to have to postpone my visit to Spain till a later date. Unfortunately, I have come to Europe with a cause, and I am not absolutely free about my movements owing to this. You will know what it is from the accompanying leaflet. It became urgently necessary for me first to come to Switzerland for

the purpose I have in mind. And if I had strictly followed my original program, my visit to your country would have been a hurried one, which would have disappointed me greatly, for the idea of Spain has such a deep attraction for my mind. I am looking forward to the time when I shall have the leisure to have a full enjoyment of my stay in your beautiful country and to be able to come into an intimate touch with the heart of Spain.

Very sincerely yours,

Rabindranath Tagore

Unfortunately, he had no other occasion to come to Spain, and after 1936 it was out of question. The author of the present paper wants to say that the one of the mistake what has been done by Tagore was not travel to Spain. The relation with Zenobia and Juan Ramón it came cool and they left to translate more books in Spanish. if Tagore went in Spain then all Tagore work's which has been published in English also they can edited in to Spanish. ■

Rabindranath Tagore's publications translated into Spanish by Zenobia Camprubi Aymar.

1. *-La luna nueva* (The Crescent Moon / Shishu). 1915. Madrid: Impr. Clásica Espanola.
2. *-EI cartero del rey* (The Post Office / Dakghor). 1917. Madrid: Tip. Lit. A. de Angel Alcoy.
3. *-Pajaros perdidos* (Stray Birds). 1917. Madrid: Tip. Lit. de Angel Alcoy.
4. *-EI jardinero* (The Gardener / Mali). 1917. Madrid: Imp^a de Fortanet.
5. *-Ofrenda lirica* (Gitanjali). 1918. Madrid: Tip. Lit. de A. Alcoy.
6. *-EI asceta* (The Ascetic / Sonyosi). 1918. Madrid: Tip. Lit. de Angel Alcoy.
7. *-EI rey y la reina* (The King and The Queen / Raja o Rani). 1918. Madrid: Tip. Lit. de A. Alcoy.
8. *-Ciclo de la primavera* (The Cycle of Spring / Falguni). 1918. Madrid: Tip^a de Fortanet.
9. *-La cosecha* (Fruit Gathering). 1918. Madrid: Tip^a de Fortanet.
10. *-Malini* (Malini). 1918. Madrid: Tip. Lit. de A. Alcoy.
11. *-Chitra* (Chitra / Chitrangoda). 1919. Madrid: Imp^a de Fortanet.
12. *-Regalo de amante* (Lover's Gift). 1919. Madrid: Tip^a de Fortanet.
13. *-Shantiniketan - Morada de Paz* (Shantiniketan. The Bolpur School of R. Tagore). 1919. Madrid: Impr^a de Fortanet Note: Authors: W. W. Pearson and R. Tagore.
14. *-EI rey del salon oscuro* (The King of the Dark Chamber / Raja). 1919. Madrid: Imp^a de Fortanet.
15. *-Sacrificio* (Sacrifice / Bisorjon). 1919. Madrid: Tip. Lit. de A. Alcoy.
16. *-Transito* (Crossing). 1920. Madrid: Tip^a de Fortanet.
17. *-Mashi y otros cuentos* (Mashi and Other Stories). 1920. Madrid: Imp^a de Fortanet.
18. *-La hermana mayor y otros cuentos.* (Didi, etc) 1921 . Madrid: Impr^a Maroto.
19. *-La fujitiva.* (The Fugitive) 1922. Madrid: Talleres Poligraficos.
20. *-Jardinillos de Navidad y Año Nuevo.* 1933. Madrid: A. Jimenez.
21. *-Las piedras hambrientas y otros cuentos* (Hungry Stones and Other Stories / Khudito Pashan. etc). 1955. Madrid: Afrodisio Aguado.
22. *-Obra escogida.* 1955. Madrid: Ed. Aguilar (Biblioteca Premios Nobel).
23. *-Recuerdos* (My Reminiscences / Jibonsmrity). 1961 . Barcelona: Ed. Plaza Janes.
24. *-EI naufragio* (The Wreck / Noukadubi). 1964. Barcelona: Ed. Plaza Janes.
25. *-Entrevisiones de Bengala* (Glimpses of Bengal). 1965. Barcelona: Plaza Janes.
26. *-Poemas de Kabir* (Poems of Kabir). 1965. Barcelona: Ed. Plaza Janes.
27. *-EI sentido de ta vida* (Sadhana / Sadhona). 1968. Madrid. Ed. Aguilar.
28. *-Nacionalismo* (Nationalism). 1968. Madrid: Ed. Aguilar.
29. *-Obra selecta* (Selected Work). 1991 . Barcelona: Circulo de Lectores.

Important Note: The editions of these books have been numerous first, the ones published in Spain during the 1920's and 1930's then, after the Spanish Civil War, the ones published in Argentina by Losada Publishing House (which no longer exists); and then again in Spain during the 1980's and 1990's by Alianza Editorial and EDAF Publishing Houses. Most of the books translated by Camprubi contain splendid poems written by Jimenez in the introductions and dedicated to Tagore or the characters in the texts. Many translations of other Tagorian texts by Camprubi were planned however, in the end. some were not translated or, if so, not published.