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F. Scott Fitzgerald. 2016. *Poemas de la era del jazz*. Introducción y traducción de Jesús Isaías Gómez López. Madrid: Visor. 180 pp. ISBN: 978-84-9895-948-2.

Juan Ignacio Guijarro González
Universidad de Sevilla
jiguijarro@us.es

It is no coincidence that in *Midnight in Paris* (2011), Woody Allen's nostalgic recreation of US expatriate culture in France during the 1920s, Francis Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda should play a crucial role, since both have come to embody that landmark decade. Even though academic interest in dead white male authors like Fitzgerald—Ernest Hemingway, J. D. Salinger, Vladimir Nabokov, among others—has recently waned, his canonical status remains unquestionable. *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is considered by many the foremost US novel of the twentieth century, Fitzgerald's works are constantly reprinted, and even Hollywood has lately produced Baz Luhrmann's 2013 rendering of *The Great Gatsby*, and David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008). Spanish publishing has also experienced a Fitzgerald boom since 2011, coinciding with the seventieth anniversary of his untimely death in 1940: new translations of *The Great Gatsby* have appeared, and collections of essays, letters and short-stories have been made available to Spanish readers (often, for the first time), by both major and independent publishers.

This is the cultural context in which Jesús Isaías Gómez López's bilingual edition of *Poemas de la era del jazz* must be located, as the latest Fitzgerald texts recovered in Spain. This volume, which the author dedicates to the late Manuel Villar Raso, is largely based on the work of another deceased scholar: Matthew J. Bruccoli's *F. Scott Fitzgerald: Poems (1911-1940)* (1981). Gómez López extends the path he had previously explored with the complete poetry of Aldous Huxley (2011) and Ray Bradbury (2013), both published by Cátedra in the prestigious series "Letras Universales." As is usually the case with Visor (a leading Spanish publisher of poetry with many US authors in its vast catalogue), *Poemas de la era del jazz* is a commercial edition, not a scholarly one: it includes a brief introduction (7-21), a helpful bibliography (22-23) and scattered footnotes.

In his illuminating introduction, Gómez López contends that Fitzgerald's poems often focus on "lo cotidiano, la nota simpática a modo de recorte de prensa, la parodia, la broma y la crítica" ["the everyday, the kind note in the form of a press clipping, parody,

jokes or criticism"] (13). The core paradox that *Poemas de la era del jazz* underscores is that a novelist rightly celebrated for having penned some of the most lyrical prose in all US literature proved unable to publish a single poetry collection. None of the fifty-one texts included in this anthology can remotely rival the extreme lyricism of the unforgettable closing of *The Great Gatsby*: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (Fitzgerald [1925] 1974, 188). Gómez López illustrates Fitzgerald's admiration for John Keats by quoting a letter that the novelist wrote to his daughter Scottie: "La *Oda a una urna griega* es irresistiblemente bella en cada una de sus sílabas del mismo modo que las notas de la *Novena Sinfonía* de Beethoven [...] Creo que la habré leído unas cien veces" (12). He adds that Fitzgerald also admired Rupert Brooke, from whom he would take the suggestive title of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920).

Keats is particularly evoked in poems such as "To Anne," "Clay Feet," "My First Love," "Rain Before Dawn," "One Southern Girl" and "For a Long Illness." However, many texts in *Poemas de la era del jazz* do not echo the aesthetics of John Keats, but rather that of Ogden Nash (1902-1971), a contemporary of Fitzgerald who became one of the most popular national versifiers in the 1930s. Nash's light comic verse lacks the elegance and wit of song lyrics, such as those composed by Cole Porter (who also appears in *Midnight in Paris*). This intertextual link is made explicit in the brief poem entitled "Apology to Ogden Nash" included in this anthology. This is one of several instances where a brief footnote would have been useful, since Nash is unknown in Spain. Fitzgerald's Nash-inspired playful tone clearly predominates in pieces such as "Half-and-Half Girl," "Refrain for a Poem," "A Song Number Idea," "To the Ring Lardners," "Because," "Spring Song," "Lest We Forget" and "Obit on Parnassus," an inventive overview of the age at which major authors died, from Byron, Shelley and Keats to Landor, who lived until he was ninety—it is sadly ironic that Fitzgerald should write this piece in 1937, only three years before dying himself, aged forty-four.

Fitzgerald is traditionally credited with having coined the expression "Jazz Age" in the title of his 1922 collection *Tales from the Jazz Age*. Gómez López wisely includes in his selection two poems related to jazz discourse: "A Blues," and the more comic "On My Ragtime Family Tree." However, both texts pale in comparison to what Langston Hughes achieved in poetry books like *The Weary Blues* (1926) and, consequently, are not even mentioned in Sascha Feinstein's *Jazz Poetry. From the 1920s to the Present* (1997).

Other pieces in *Poemas de la era del jazz* merit particular attention as well. "To Carter, a Friendly Finger" brings to mind the climactic incident in *The Great Gatsby*, since here Death reminds an expert driver that "you might meet another / Who drives as fast but clumsily as hell" (118). Film stars like Greta Garbo and Gary Cooper make a cameo appearance in "The Big Academy Dinner," Fitzgerald's sardonic rejection of Hollywood, where he worked as a screenwriter. It is where he met Sheila Graham, a

journalist with whom he established a relationship, dedicating poems to her such as "To Sheila" and "Beloved Infidel" (1958)—the latter being the very title that she would use for a book chronicling their time together. Meanwhile, the trace of his wife Zelda is hardly visible in the anthology. One final text worth mentioning is "On Watching the Candidates in the Newsreels," the only poem in the collection devoted to sociopolitical issues, which Fitzgerald neatly avoided. Using light humor again, he mocks the image of presidential candidates of his time, like Robert Taft and George Dewey, who never succeeded in their attempts to reach the White House.

Gómez López proves to be a most competent translator, capable of rendering the playful and ironic nuances of Fitzgerald's poems, although sadly his introduction does not discuss his approach to translating practices. The general tone of the translation is solid, and several lines do stand out for their brilliance: "Oh tender / Was your touch in Spring, your barefoot voice" becomes "¡Cuán dulce / era tu caricia en primavera y tu voz descalza" (76-77); likewise, the line "Words that have melted in the snow" is rendered as "palabras en la nieve derretidas" (128-129). Rather inevitably, some translating choices might be questioned, like rendering the title of the poem "A Song Number Idea," unexpectedly, as "Una idea de muchas canciones." Moreover, a witty and most challenging pun vanishes when the line "The Papal Bulls and rural ones" is translated in a literal manner as "las bulas papales ni las rurales" (134-135). But these are all minor details in a most remarkable translation project.

Jesús Isaías Gómez López's bilingual edition of Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *Poemas de la era del jazz* is a major contribution both to the Spanish literary market and to the field of Fitzgerald studies in our country. This volume makes available to Spanish readers for the first time a highly representative corpus of the poems by the author of *The Great Gatsby*, clearly demonstrating that, despite his admiration for John Keats and Rupert Brooke, the true lyricism of Francis Scott Fitzgerald is to be found in his prose, not in his poetry.

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Juan Ignacio Guijarro González teaches mostly US literature and US studies at the Universidad de Sevilla. He has published research on authors including Zelda Fitzgerald, Vladimir Nabokov, Arthur Miller, Toni Morrison and Sherman Alexie, as well as on filmmakers like Spike Lee and John Sayles. He is on the Editorial Board of the *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos* and is a member of the REWEST research group (UPV/EHU). He currently serves on the Executive Board of SAAS (Spanish Association for American Studies).

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa (Literatura Inglesa y Norteamericana). Facultad de Filología. C/ Palos de la Frontera, s/n. 41004, Sevilla, Spain. Tel.: +34 954551558.