

**Agustín Coletes Blanco and Alicia Laspra Rodríguez, eds. and translators, *Libertad frente a Tiranía: Poesía inglesa de la Guerra de la Independencia (1808-1814). Antología bilingüe. Madrid: Fundación Dos de Mayo / Espasa, 2013. Pp. 387. €23,90. ISBN 9788467006827.***

This bilingual poetry anthology is among the latest publications from the Madrid regional government's *Fundación Dos de Mayo, Nación y Libertad* [Foundation for the Second of May, Nation and Liberty]. Founded in 2008 to oversee activities commemorating the bicentenary of the Madrid uprising against Napoleon on the second of May 1808, the Foundation played a leading role four years later in the bicentenary commemorations of the Cadiz Constitution of 1812. Its objective is not only to raise public awareness of the events of 200 years ago, but also, through its publishing arm and continued activities, to 'inspire and disseminate the values of nation and liberty which that historic date symbolizes, and which we have inherited in our own Constitution of 1978'. As the blurb explains, *Libertad frente a Tiranía* [Liberty in the Face of Tyranny] was conceived to bring English-language poetry on the Peninsular Wars, which in Spanish are called the Guerra de la Independencia [War of Independence], to a Spanish audience already familiar with Spain's own literature of war.

While *Libertad frente a Tiranía* is aimed at a well-informed general audience, it is also a work of careful scholarship. Agustín Coletes Blanco and Alicia Laspra Rodríguez, who between them have selected, translated and introduced some sixty poems by over forty different authors, are based in the department of English, French and German at the Universidad de Oviedo in northern Spain. They provide a brief introduction (eight pages), which contextualises the widespread British poetic support for Spain that forms the subject of their anthology. Their opening claim, and the justification for the project, is that 'the majority of British writers, not only established ones, but also the less well-known, took inspiration from the Spanish War of Independence to develop their literary creativity' (23; all translations in this review are mine unless otherwise stated). While there may be a risk of overstatement in arguing that a *majority* of contemporary writers dealt with the war in their creative works, it is certainly true that a surprising number of the big and not so big names of the time were driven to add their voices to the widespread British sympathy for Spain.

The anthology is organized into three sections: 'Los poetas consagrados' [established poets], 'Los autores relevantes en su época' [authors relevant in their time] and 'Poesía publicada en prensa' [poetry published in the press]. Each poem is provided in both the original English and a facing Spanish translation, in which the translators have striven, with some accomplishment, to replicate the tone and register of the original. Footnotes are used sparingly, by and large to explain proper names or allusions, but a comprehensive scholarly bibliography ensures that readers whose interest is piqued will be able to follow up on the editors' leads. In the first section, which is by far the longest, we find six names very familiar to English readers, although some may be less so to Spanish readers: Hemans, Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, Wolfe and Southey. Each is given a tag explaining their connection with or attitude to the war, so that Hemans's tag is 'Enthusiastic support for the cause', Wordsworth's 'Trust in a final triumph', Byron's 'The testament of a heterodox', Scott's 'From Don Rodrigo to Wellington', Wolfe's 'The most popular poem', and Southey's 'The Perception of a Hispanist'. Each is introduced by a brief preliminary study comprising a biographical sketch, account of the poet's perspective on the war, and an analysis of the selected poem or poems, all accompanied by a sound scholarly apparatus that will facilitate further research. After the first section, we pass to the eleven 'lesser' poets whose works the editors locate 'in an intermediate terrain between what is stable and what is ephemeral' (183), and whose names are likely unfamiliar even to the non-specialist British reader. Indeed, as

the editors note, they have included several authors of whom nothing at all is known bar their names and that they published a poem in support of the Spanish cause. The final section includes twenty-six poems published in British periodicals from across the political spectrum, including *The Morning Post*, *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Times* and *The Sun*. While many are anonymous or pseudonymous, two are by named authors (Eyles Irwin, Thomas Moore) who also appeared in the second section, which seems an odd choice that de-emphasises these authors' sustained engagement with the topic of Spain.

Overall, *Libertad frente a Tiranía* will be a valuable book for Spanish readers unfamiliar with British poetic support for the Spanish anti-Napoleonic cause, and a valuable contribution to the burgeoning field of Anglo-Spanish literary and cultural connections.

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