

**Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Hellas: Introducción, traducción y notas de José Ruiz Mas* [*Hellas: Introduction, translation and notes by José Ruiz Mas*]. Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neohelénicos y Chipriotas, 2021. Pp. 142. £0. ISBN 9788418948053.**

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The Centro de Estudios Bizantinos Neohelénicos y Chipriotas, a research institute associated with the University of Granada, could not have afforded to miss the opportunity to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Greek-Ottoman War (1821–30), through which Greece obtained her independence from the Ottoman Empire. Naturally, the celebrations of Greece's independence have not gone unnoticed in Greece and Cyprus, but in Spain the event has had less presence, except for historians specialised in the Eastern Mediterranean affairs of the nineteenth century.

Many know about Byron's role in the Greek war of liberation, but Shelley's is not so widely known outside of literary scholars' circles. Unlike his close friend Byron, Shelley never did get to set foot on the Greek lands, although he did consider doing so at some stage. Shelley unexpectedly drowned soon after publishing *Hellas*, but up until the point of this tragic event, he had followed closely all the war news and lamented Britain's lack of involvement in the Greek struggle, which favoured Ottoman interests.

Ruiz Mas's timely edition comprises a thorough presentation on the historical context of Greece and the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s. He concentrates on philhellenism in Britain and more specifically on Shelley's interest in the Greek struggle. In his introduction, Ruiz Mas elaborates on Shelley's staunch chant of the virtues of the Greeks as a people and on their love for liberty. He then explores Shelley's revolutionary and radical liberal beliefs to explain the poet's favouring of the Greek cause, his everyday life during his self-exiled stay from England in Italy, and his studies of Greece (including ancient Greek playwrights and philosophers, and Greek newspapers, journals, and history books). There are also details of Shelley's personal contacts with leading Greek scholars and politicians in his Pisan Circle (the most prominent of these being the exiled Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos, private teacher of Greek to Mary Shelley and future political leader). Finally, Ruiz Mas explains Shelley's poetic inspiration from Aeschylus' *Persae*, and his philhellenism under the influence of Mavrokordatos, which resulted in Shelley's deeply ideologically driven verse drama *Hellas*.

*Hellas* was published by C. & J. Ollier as early as 1822 on Shelley's insistence as he wished to have an impact on the immediacy of the events taking place in the Aegean. Shelley did not disguise his propagandistic intention in the writing of his pro-Hellene play. Due to its forced urgency, some parts of the work were left unfinished. This is the case of the Prologue of *Hellas* (unpublished in the play's first edition of 1822 and only published in Richard Garnett's 1862 edition), where some phrases and sentences are left incomplete, evidence that Shelley had been working on the play until his untimely and unexpected death. This Spanish edition includes these textual gaps, Shelley's personal explanatory notes at the end of his verse play, as well as those added by Mary Shelley after the termination of the Greek War of Independence. Indeed, Mary Shelley's notes explain the circumstances of her late husband's writing of *Hellas* and the political events that took place, subsequent to the poet's death, throughout 1822–30. Mary Shelley insists on the prophetic nature of her husband's commentaries and impressions offered in 1821, which assert a belief in Greece's future, final, victory, and an acknowledgement of the country's independence from the Ottomans at a time when such a prospect seemed improbable. Mary Shelley also regards *Hellas* as an inspired and prophetic promoter of the enthusiastic atmosphere of liberal revolutions that were to take place in Europe during the late 1820s and 1830s.

Ruiz Mas' Spanish translation endeavours to be faithful to Shelley's complicated English style and for this he deserves due credit. Shelley's imagery and phrasing is not easy to encapsulate in a foreign language, especially when the multi-syllable Spanish vocabulary has to encompass the pregnant meaning of Shelley's poetic lines, as is specifically the case, for example, in the Chorus's and the different Semi-Choruses' verse interventions. Apart from the intrinsic worth of the poetic Spanish translation of Shelley's poetry, special recognition must be granted to the editor's copious explanatory footnotes on the historical context of Britain, Greece, and the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, of the literary and mythological allusions and references made by Shelley in his play, and on geographic details of Greece and Turkey unfamiliar to non-native readers. Shelley's *oeuvre* has long deserved an edition of *Hellas* for Spanish-speaking literary scholars and Ruiz Mas's edition has successfully achieved this momentous task.

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