



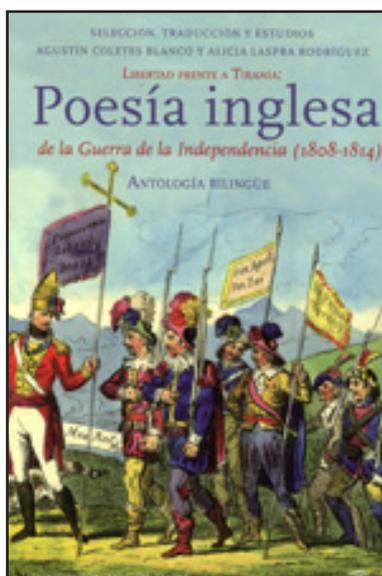
## Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo

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Agustín COLETES BLANCO y Alicia LASPRA RODRÍGUEZ (2013), *Libertad frente a tiranía: poesía inglesa de la Guerra de la Independencia (1808-1814)*. *Antología bilingüe*, Madrid, Fundación Dos de Mayo - Espasa, 387 pp.



Readers of *Cuadernos* will need little introduction to this Anglo-Spanish anthology; the first installment of a major project to recover the English, French, Portuguese and German poems written about Spain during the Peninsular War. Edited by Agustín Coletes Blanco and Alicia Laspra Rodríguez, *Libertad frente a tiranía: poesía inglesa de la Guerra de la Independencia (1808-1814)* makes a noble defence for the poetry published during this period: «Poesía, porque se trata de un género literario que implica inmediatez y fuerza expresiva en la respuesta y, por tanto, en la mediación entre el autor y el público» (25). Such expressiveness is a feature not only of the English poems chosen for inclusion, but of the editors' own sensitively considered translations.

*Libertad Frente a Tiranía* is an anthology divided into three parts. Part 1 offers a comprehensive selection of the Spanish-themed war poems written by authors such as Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, and Southey, now considered canonical («los poetas consagrados»); the second focuses on poets who enjoyed contemporary celebrity («los autores relevantes en su época»); while Part 3 is devoted to the largely anonymous (or at least pseudonymous) publications that appeared in contemporary British newspapers and periodicals («poesía publicada en prensa»). This division is, for the most part, successful; prompting

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important questions about the perceived quality, contemporary demand for, and initial reception of these recovered poems. But the distinctions suggested are not always easy to uphold. Not only do Thomas Moore and Anna Laetitia Barbauld (listed under Part 2) arguably possess far greater claims to canonical status than Charles Wolfe (included in Part 1); but, alongside William Sotheby and John Wilson Crocker, they have certainly enjoyed greater fame than Eyrles Irwin and John Gwilliam, who may indeed more accurately be labeled as «autores relevantes en su época». The editors partly nod towards this when they explain in the introduction to Part 2 that:

Naturalmente el canon literario está sujeto a cambios, y quizás el caso más claro, en el ámbito de estos autores y obras, sea el de Anna Barbauld (1743-1825), prolífica literata que también forma parte del grupo y que quizás en un futuro próximo pase a ser considerada como uno más entre los grandes escritores románticos, algo que ya ha sucedido con Felicia Hemans (184).

This point is worth emphasizing since the archival research that defines this impressive project exerts significant pressure on our inherited notions of canonicity. As such, one of the editors' greatest strengths lies in the easefulness with which they lucidly relate the different Parts of the anthology to each other. A quick glance at the Contents List, for example, reveals that Irwin and Moore feature in Parts 2 and 3. Such overlaps are deftly handled by the editors, who introduce Irwin's *Ode to Iberia* [*Oda a Iberia*] relative to Felicia Hemans's *England and Spain* [*Inglaterra y España*] (188-189); and, later, suggest that Laura Sophia Temple's *The Siege of Zaragoza* [*El Sitio de Zaragoza*], listed in Part 2) might be best understood as a poem that continues the «gesta maña» inaugurated by Wordsworth (and Joseph Blacket) three years earlier (195).

The detailed introductions prefatory to each Part provide a good framework for the sixty-three poems anthologized. In Part 1, the editors offer literary-biographical sketches for each of the six authors (Felicia Hemans, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Walter Scott, Charles Wolfe and Robert Southey). Opening with details garnered from both established and revisionist authorities —as exemplified by the entry on Byron, which builds upon Leslie Marchand's 1979 biography *Byron: A Portrait* and Fiona MacCarthy's *Byron: Life and Legend* (2003)— the editors develop readings of the poets' corpora at large in order to better understand their Spanish-themed poems. Wordsworth's Spanish sonnets are thus understood in relation to the poet's laboured composition of his long prose tract, *Concerning the Convention of Cintra* (1809) —proving that «Wordsworth hacía un seguimiento puntual de los asuntos españoles» (70); while Walter Scott's Visigoth romance *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811) is prefaced by an introduction which details the ways in which his bestselling *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) had already begun the process of 'masculinizing' «una poesía de guerra que hasta entonces había sido fundamentalmente pacifista e incidido sobre todo en las trágicas consecuencias de los conflictos bélicos» (123). These introductions also serve to contextualize the editors' judicious selection of verses from longer poems, such as Hemans's *England and Spain* (1808) or Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Canto 1), for which helpful overviews are provided. The contextualization offered by these individual introductions extends beyond the author's specific canon, in order to highlight, for instance, how *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Vision of Don Roderick* share the same verse form (94), or to underscore the politics of the latter by suggesting how Crocker's *The Battle of Talavera* might serve as a productive counter-example.

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The ideological import of a specific rhyme scheme, narrative structure, or publication outlet is explored throughout the anthology, in its celebration of the variety of verse forms employed during this period (184). The longer general introductions to Parts 2 and 3—which replace the author-specific introductions of Part 1—offer especially helpful overviews of poetic technique (identifying, for instance, the prevalence of the ode form in press publications) and insightful analyses based upon chronological groupings. The latter offers an all-important benchmark for the poems' composition and reception histories; the military successes of 1811, for example, compensating for the bitter disappointments of 1810, and 1812 marking a clear turning point for the fortunes of the allied army.

Throughout, the editors make transparent statements of the methodologies employed: they generously identify their main sources (namely, the Bodleian and British Libraries), justify their choice of extracts from longer poems, and account for their selection criteria (especially important for the twenty-six poems included in Part 3 as representative samples of the press's larger output of Peninsular War-themed poetry). The comprehensive bibliography, helpfully divided into primary and secondary sources, serves as an extension of this methodological transparency. Testifying to the truly Anglo-Spanish foundations of the editors' careful scholarship, the works referenced range from well established historical sources to recent articles of literary criticism. The bibliography is thus likely to serve as a reference tool in its own right.

Coletes Blanco and Laspra Rodríguez's commitment to engaging with existing scholarship adds a rewardingly reflective dimension to the anthology. Diego Saglia's work, especially his monograph *Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia* (2000), is referred to at several points; with the editors citing, for example, his theory of the Spanish «counter-text» in order to help illuminate the common binaries (such as «liberty and tyranny» or «liberty and death») that structure many of the poems anthologized. But *Libertad frente a tiranía* also makes its own, original contribution to this field of study. The editors discuss (sometimes for the first time) several poems sadly overlooked since their original publication date. The volume *Spanish Eclogues. Including an Elegy on the Death of the Marquis de La Romana, with Other Pieces*, signed simply «Hispanicus», merits the detailed consideration it receives in the introduction to Part 2, with the translations provided for the third Eclogue (between Fernandez and Isabella), as well as the elegy to Romana mentioned in the work's longer title, raising fascinating questions about the inheritance and transformation of generic categories. The related issues of dissemination and influence are also brought to the forefront, with the editors drawing attention, for example, to the influential role played by the Post Office (especially for the poems included in Part 3) and the fashion for musical compositions by which Sir Thomas Dyer (then enlisted in the British army) helped popularize Anna Maria Porter's «A War Song», «traduciéndose al español e incluso musicándose por parte de Federico Moretti, general músico del Ejército español» (188). The contemporary translation of Porter's poem warrants investigation of its own, as does the «Free translation of the verses Written by the Duke of Frias y Uceda [...]»—two, poems suggestive of a degree of contemporary cultural exchange more extensive than usually granted.

At various points the editors encourage their readers to reflect upon the larger political narratives to which individual poems might be ascribed. In Part 3, notably, they include a table descriptive of the publication type and political affiliation of the newspapers and reviews used as their principal sources (see p. 309). What emerges is an engaging account of how individual poems were often re-published across different platforms: «A veces una poesía que se publicaba por primera vez en un diario era reproducida nuevamente en otro, o en una revista, y viceversa» (295). Coletes Blanco and Laspra Rodríguez cite «The

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Apes: A Fable from the Italian» —which appeared in both *The Monthly Magazine* (1813) and *The Morning Chronicle*, two «pro-*whig*» publications— as a good example of this. The descriptive title given to the short poem «Lines, Written on reading in the *Edinburgh Review* Some Remarks on the Continuation of the Slave Trade by Spain and Portugal» (published in *The Morning Chronicle*) invites readers to continue to explore this intriguing relationship between different media outlets.

While the anthology is primarily concerned with the Spanish inflections of British poetic responses to the Peninsular-War —as the editors make clear in their selection criteria for the poems included in Part 3 (see p. 295)— the references to Portugal are carefully explained; subtly underlining, throughout, that the war exceeded Franco-Spanish animosity. The impressive breadth of scholarship involved in the making of this anthology is further evinced by the editors' discussion of various poems that, for reasons of space and economy, they have not been able to include within the anthology *per se*, as instanced by their detailed consideration of 'Mrs Philippart's' *Victoria* discussed in the introduction to Part 2.

Also indicative of the larger implications of *Libertad frente a tiranía* are the various illustrations that punctuate its different introductory sections. These black and white illustrations, which are not unfortunately listed, add an important visual dimension to the anthology. While they mostly exceed the 1808-1814 chronology with which the poems themselves are concerned, the illustrations offer important evidence of Spain's continued hold of the British imagination. It is, however, for the poet-artist Edward Hawke Locker that the illustrations are perhaps of most immediate significance. Following Saglia's authorial attribution to Locker of the anonymously published, *Catalonia, a Poem*, the editors include one watercolour (196) and one drawing (308) from his later publication *Views in Spain* (1824).

Readers are bound to discover new poems in this collection, but with an Index of titles/first lines (complete with authorial attribution, where possible) available in both English and Spanish, already familiar poems are also easily searchable. That the anthology does not include line references (for either the original poems or the editors' translations) is only more acutely felt because this volume will be a valuable sourcebook for Anglo-Spanish scholars. These readers, in particular, often have to defend the literary quality of the texts they study. While this anthology concedes that the question of quality is indeed a thorny issue (see p. 185), the poems included —and so beautifully introduced by the editors— testify to the wide-range of experiences (both technical and, on occasion, poignantly personal) that contributed towards the composition and reception of a distinct and successful body of Spanish-themed poems published by British authors between 1808 and 1814 —and whose legacy, thanks to Coletes Blanco and Laspra Rodríguez's dedicated efforts can be fully appreciated today.

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