

**José Ruiz Mas, María Antonia López-Burgos del Barrio, and Eroulla Demetriou, eds., *Women's Travel Writings in Iberia*. Chawton House Library Series. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013. Vol. 1. Pp. xxx-258; Vol. 2. Pp. 270; Vol. 3. Pp. xii-422; Vol. 4. Pp. 431; and Vol. 5. Pp. xvii-459. £425. ISBN 9781851966479.**

The recognition of the impact of Spain and Portugal in British Romanticism has of late been an issue arousing considerable interest among scholars who dedicate their research to Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-Portuguese literary relations, namely Saglia (2000), Alberich (2001, 2013), Machado de Sousa (2007), Duarte (2010), Almeida (2010), Gândara-Terenas (2012), and Coletes-Blanco and Laspra-Rodríguez (2013). Their studies deserve due attention as they re-introduce the idea of cultural interchange among the different participants of the Peninsular War (Spain-Britain and Portugal-Britain) who fought their common enemy: Napoleon Bonaparte. The British Romantic 'discoverers' of Spain and Portugal soon realized that these two countries, systematically ignored by the educational Grand Tour of the eighteenth century, enjoyed rich Roman and Arabic/Oriental artistic heritages and boasted powerful vernacular literatures, histories and folklore. Furthermore, the heroic peoples of Spain and Portugal had recently proven thirsty for social and political revolution, longing for their own liberal Constitutions (1812 and 1822 respectively), fighting for their independence from the invasion of a foreign power and from the political and ideological manacles of the omnipotent Roman Catholic Church, absolutist monarchies and an army of idle aristocrats. The 1830-50 period saw a large group of intrepid British ladies crisscross the Iberian Peninsula in search of the personal and psychological freedom that their Romantic and early Victorian society had denied them.

This is the historical and literary backdrop against which Pickering & Chatto's series *Women's Travel Writings in Iberia* comes to the fore. The Iberian series consists of three travel accounts published in the first half of the nineteenth century and now re-published in a facsimile edition and accompanied by a General Introduction, a Chronology of the life and works of each of the three travel writers, and editorial notes, all written by three Spanish travel literature experts of international renown.

The choice of the English authors, Marianne Baillie, Lady Henrietta Georgiana Chatterton and Sarah Ellis as representatives of female travellers in Iberia during the Romantic/early Victorian period is probably determined by the limited selection of Iberian travelogues available in the Chawton House Library. Baillie (c.1795-c.1831), it must be granted, did write a popular account in the shape of a collection of letters to her mother on her nearly three-year stay in Lisbon and Sintra, where her husband had been sent to work due to an (unexplained) interest of their personal protector, Lord Chichester. Although she hated almost every minute of her first two years in Portugal, she faithfully described the social and political atmosphere of post-Peninsular-War Portugal under D. João IV, who spent most of his reign in Brazil. An extra asset to Baillie's account is the inclusion of several of her poems, written while in Portugal, which she later used in her *Trifles in Verse* (1825), a collection that turned her into a minor poet of the time.

However, Chatterton and Ellis are not so relevant to the history of English female travel writing in nineteenth-century Spain. Chatterton (1806-1876) became a well-known travel writer on Ireland and the French Pyrenees, but her meagre experience of Spain was limited to three short excursions to San Sebastian and to some remote rural areas of Catalonia. Due to her constant 'low spirits' (as she used to call them), she travelled with difficulty and was constantly looking forward to returning to her travel headquarters in the French Pyrenees, where she felt safer and more comfortable. Yet Chatterton can be viewed as a real expert on things Spanish if one compares her to Ellis.

Indeed, Ellis (1799-1872), the best-selling writer of treatises about how to be the model English Victorian middle-class and upper-class mother, daughter or wife for the sake of the glory of the British Empire, did not even once cross the French border to visit a single Spanish village. She travelled to the French Pyrenees with her husband, Rev. William Ellis, a well-known Congregationalist missionary, in order to allow him to spend a few months of rest and rehabilitation among its spas and idyllic mountain views after suffering from what seems to have been depression. Ellis plagiarised French local guides on the Pau and the Bearn area, as the volume's editor Eroulla Demetriou shows. In the eyes of a staunch Congregationalist like Ellis, the south of France was contemplated as an only slightly less uncivilized prolongation of Spain. Her only views of 'Spain' are focused on her disgust for the abundant Spanish- banditti-looking shepherds and Arab-looking mule-drivers that she often sees on the French mountain paths.

English travel in Portugal is well represented by Baillie, but other British post-Peninsular-War women travellers in Spain (Londonderry, Witson, Grovenor, Romer, Quillinan, Tenison, to name but a few), would have made a better choice. However, this does not detract from the good editing of the three selected works. The editors include an illuminating General Introduction to the three travel accounts and to the period, more generally, as well as to the personalities and bibliography of their authors. Breaking with the tradition of the late-Romantic/early-Victorian solitary and brave female traveller who ventured into the unknown lands of previously-unvisited and scarcely-explored countries, the three authors adhere to a less heroic type of woman who travelled in the security and company of her husband. These women had not taken up travelling voluntarily: Baillie and Ellis were 'forced' to travel into the wilderness of Southern Europe by their respective husbands but enjoyed the aid of a train of local servants. Chatterton took up travelling south in search of a pleasant climate that could provide her with a remedy to her ailments, again with the invaluable help of local servants hired specifically to carry her in a *chaise à porteur*. The editors' General Introduction becomes all the more valuable as they indeed make the most of the restricted Spanish experience in Chatterton's and Ellis's travel books.

The editors have also contributed a thorough Chronology of each of the selected authors. Ellis's life and works are more widely known, especially by any specialist on Victorian conduct books; but searching for relevant information on the life and literary highlights of a minor English poet such as Baillie and a minor travel writer/novelist such as Chatterton is no easy feat. José Ruiz Mas has made a mammoth effort to find biographical information on Baillie, of whom so little is known and so much is left to mystery, especially regarding her life after her return to England. María Antonia López-Burgos del Barrio has wisely relied on E.H. Dering's memoirs of Lady Chatterton to complete the puzzle of her adventurous travelling life and her prolific, though mediocre, literary career. The editors also include very complete sections dedicated to the reception of each of the works under study with information on the fairly numerous reviews that each of these travel books gave rise to. Special mention should be made of the strenuous research carried out as far as editorial notes are concerned. Every literary reference is identified and explained in detail that is easily comprehensible to the layman and the specialist. The editors also boast a profound knowledge of French, Spanish and Portuguese languages, literatures, histories and geographies that will not go unnoticed by any researcher on this period of European cultural and international relations. This collection is therefore essential for the shelves of any university or research library.

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