Particular Ways of Seeing: British Women in Portugal at the Beginning of the 19th Century*

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Travelling has been an activity mainly ascribed to men. Writing about those travels has also been a task traditionally endorsed to men. For many centuries, travelling meant going out, to explore and to face continuing difficulties which were not prone to be endured by women who were viewed as belonging within the private or domestic sphere. Thus, travel writing had its roots in male culture and experience and one may argue that the interference of women was viewed in a rather biased way.

At the beginning of the 19th century the panorama in Britain was no different. Women travellers and particularly women's travel writings were regarded as quite different from their male counterparts. Until then, fewer than twenty British women had published travel narratives (Turner 113) or they were not even aware of their role as travellers – "(…) very few women broke out of the domestic circle in the nineteenth century to venture into the wider world as self-acknowledge travelers." (Worley 40) Even if this was not accurate as more recent critics have argued (Mills 1991) women travel writers had to deal with more than one preconception.

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If they travelled (and wrote about it) for reasons other than the ones pertaining to their role as either wives, mothers or sisters they were considered eccentric and thus different from the other more conventional women including the ones who stayed at home. On the other hand, their narratives, whenever published, were immediately compared to men's writings, quite often in a deprecating even if paradoxical way. They were praised for the novelty since they were after all women and also due to the growing interest of the British reader in what Bernard Lewis named as "the new myth, still in its embryonic form, of the non-European as the embodiment of mystery and romance." (83) Simultaneously, they were under a rather close scrutiny, one that often asked from them a clear separation between private affairs and public propriety. Such was the case of Lady Montagu's *Letters* (1763) or Lady Craven's *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople* (1789), both viewed as the two greatest eighteenth-century women travellers. Their travelogues included their impressions of Turkey, a country regarded as belonging in the category of the exotic, and thus corresponding to the already mentioned interest of the British audience. Actually, Craven's work was in itself a critique of Montagu's work and intended to present a different view of Turkey since, according to Craven, "(…) whoever wrote L. M — 's Letters (for she never wrote a line of them) misrepresents things most terribly (…)." (105) In 1814, in the enlarged edition of her *Journey* she went even further and claimed that the *Letters* "(…) were most of them *male* compositions, pretending to female grace in the style, the facts mostly inventions." (289)

Thus, Craven emphasizes the difference between male and female writing and moreover she unconsciously raises another issue, which is likewise connected with this kind of writing: its authenticity. Travel writing was under the close scrutiny of either the critics' reviews or the readers who required most of the time a factual and accurate product of a first-hand observation by a personified narrator, especially in English speaking countries.[1] In the end, women were viewed as being

1. The French 'journal' could be very personal while the Anglo-Saxon travelogues (even if there are many cultural differences between the British and American ones) had a strong tendency to be utilitarian and practical. (Gross 45)

more prone to engage in trifles, or in personal matters (which were likely to be regarded as 'false') rather than in accurate information or in 'higher' subjects such as politics or religion.[2]

Nevertheless, those very same characteristics were the ones that would after all distinguish women's writings from the male travelers' accounts and which have been considered as to possibly enhance a different relationship with the foreigner/the Other within the context of colonial discourse:

> Through elements such as humour, self-deprecation, statements of affiliation, and descriptions of relationships, which stress the interpersonal nature of travel writing, these texts [by women] constitute counter-hegemonic voices within colonial discourse. (Mills 23)

In other words, women were allegedly more conscious of their own and the native's foreignness or strangeness and thus more liable to avoid prejudiced views. Having this framework in mind one will deal with the travel writings of two British women about Portugal from the first quarter of the 19th century, namely Marianne Baillie's *Lisbon in the Years 1821, 1822, and 1823*, published in 1824, and Georgianna Mitford Ancram's *Portugal, or Young Travellers. Being Some Account of Lisbon and Its Environs, and of the Tour in the Alemtéjo, in Which the Customs and Manners of the Inhabitants Are Faithfully Detailed. From the Journal Kept by a Lady During Three Years' Actual Residence*, published in 1830.

Prejudiced views were rampant among British male travelers as far as Portugal was concerned. The country (most of the time including the Iberian Peninsula) was mainly depicted as not being part of European civilization and thus in some ways very similar to other more remote and exotic places – the non-European. Although it was not a British colony one can argue that due to several different

2. This problematic has also been addressed by Worley: "In the light of the possibility of such vicious attacks, it is not surprising that these women would repeatedly reaffirm the accuracy of their accounts or would tend to limit (…) the content of their narratives (…) to those aspects (…) of life felt to be most in keeping with what was accepted as women's role in society." (44)

historical and cultural circumstances the relationship between the two countries was somewhat similar and liable to create a sort of discourse recognizable as colonialist.

Actually, when the publication of the above-mentioned works occurs, Portugal had a long tradition of historical and commercial relations with Britain. These included the oldest alliance between two European nations. It also comprised the presence of the British, either the army as well as of British authorities, that had begun during the French Invasions but which was extended well beyond the end of the Peninsular War. On the other hand, Napoleon's armies' engagement in several parts of the European continent had changed the traditional *Grand Tour* routes for travellers and if one adds the fact that the British cultural framework was changing and that the romantic ideas were influencing the way travel books were written as well as the places travellers chose to visit, then Portugal became a fairly attractive destination and the object of renewed interest. Until the end of the 18th century the style of travel writing had been dominated by what Mary Louise Pratt terms as the 'manners and customs' narrative, (126) in which the narrator adopted an impersonal role while offering contents, which should instruct the reader, viewed as scientific and informational. The romantic context contributed to the emergence of the 'sentimental traveller', whose narratives centre stage a narrator who is more interested in expressing his/her sentiments and to engage in a kind of personal interchange with the natives. On the other hand, the exotic, the picturesque, romance and mystery were then more appealing and one might argue that in Portugal, already regarded as an inferior 'primitive' country, the differences would or could be most noticeable and therefore that was the kind of panorama travellers were expecting to find. (Martins 328-329)

While those are not the main reasons why the female authors already mentioned came to Portugal, nevertheless the publication of their travel narratives was most certainly influenced by the context just described. The former book, the one by Marianne Baillie, was published in 1824, with a second edition appearing in 1825, when the authoress was already a somewhat well-known writer. In

1817, she had published *Guy of Warwick: A Legend and Other Poems*, a small edition printed in her husband's private printing press and in 1819 she had also published her first travel narrative, *First Impressions On A Tour Upon The Continent In The Summer Of 1818, Through Parts Of France, Italy, Switzerland, The Borders Of Germany, And A Part Of French Flanders*.

Her work results from a twenty-seven months' residence in Lisbon, including Sintra and a short trip to Odivelas, a place near the capital, while she accompanied her husband, Alexander Baillie, who had come to Portugal on a mission that is never clearly specified. She also had her young son with her and while in Lisbon she gave birth to a girl. Her narrative consists of sixty-five letters allegedly addressed to her mother, in a very informal tone, which allows the first-person narrator to comment on almost every aspect of Portuguese life, from what may considered to be minor subjects, or in other words subjects which would be more adequate for women, such as anything related to domesticity, to other kinds of observations concerning, for instance, politics which would be considered not suitable for a lady's pen.

Portugal, or Young Travellers, on the other hand, has eleven chapters, being a third-person narrative, mostly employing dialogue between what may be viewed as being the main characters. These are the members of the Grey family – Mr. and Mrs. Grey and their children: Bertha, age 11, Sophia/Sophy, age 16, and Mourdant, the 14-year-old boy. Part of the subtitle suggests that the narrative was based on "the journal kept by a Lady" and, in one of the dialogues, one learns that Bertha has just started one:

> The moment of inspiration is just come upon Bertha; she is preparing the first page of her journal. (…) Do not be laughed out of your intended observations, Bertha. Your English friends will be delighted to hear from you; and your journal will be the best corrective to the vein of romance in which it is said my lively little girl sometimes likes to indulge. Describe things as you see them, in simple language; and I dare say Mordaunt may himself be glad, some time or other, to refer to your journal. (Ancram 1830, 17-19)

This is one of the main reasons why the authorship of this work has been attributed to Bertha Grey. Nevertheless, the formal dimension resembles that of a novel and one that seems to be particularly interested in a specific kind of audience – the juvenile reader. The children are always eager to learn from the different experiences they have and the parents, particularly Mr. Grey, are the ones who supply the educational/informative dimension of the book. In fact, the members of the Grey family were the central characters of another work published in 1831, this time about Wales and Ireland, *The New Estate: or, The Young Travellers in Wales and Ireland*. Although a recent study of *Portugal, or The Young Travellers* (Calado, 2009) has tried to prove that it might have been the result of the efforts of the eldest sister, Sophia, with the aid of her father, Mr. Grey, the question of the authorship is now unquestionable. It is the work of Georgianna Mitford Ancram, the author not only of the works above mentioned but also of *Spain Yesterday and To-Day* (1834), and *The Young Travellers in South America: or, A Popular Introduction to the History and Resources of the Interesting and Important Region* (1835).

These two works have different characters. The latter presents the Berkley family: Mr. and Mrs. Berkley, Isabella, "the eldest, was grave and thoughtful, fond of history, and an unwearied naturalist" and Mary "[who] was exactly the reverse. Gay, thoughtless, and lively, she spoke first and thought afterwards." (1835, 5) The only further addition to their domestic circle is an orphan nephew of Mr. Berkley's – Frank Osborne – whom he had brought up from his infancy and who is now regarded as another son. In the former book, the Delville family is the protagonist: Mr. and Mrs. Delville, him being "a gentleman of easy fortune in the north of England, who had recently become heir to a rich relation in Spain." (1834, 1) Two boys – Frank and Edward – and a girl of thirteen, Ellen, complete the family picture. (2-3) Regardless of the differences in the family names and in the destination of their travels the repetition of the expression "young travellers", in three of them, and the strategy of using a family as the main characters, foregrounds the same above-mentioned formal dimension, one that seems to have a main objective: instructing the readers, particularly the young ones, in a pleasurable way.

Although published anonymously, the purpose of Ancram's book on Portugal was clear and very similar to her other accounts: a book about a residence in Portugal, and this time, the reason invoked to come to the country was the eldest daughter's illness and the need for the renowned Portuguese healthy climate.

When we talk about travel literature, particularly at the beginning of the 19th century, one has to bear in mind that this kind of writing was already well known and quite welcomed by British readers and had acquired what one may consider as being established conventions of the genre. The travel book has been viewed as a composite literary form that resists neat categorization and isolation but nevertheless there were several basic expectations.

Firstly, the writer would establish a certain kind of relationship with the readers, their potential touring partners. Thus, either in the form of a formal preface or introduction or a more informal greeting in the opening paragraphs, the introductory material often indicates what the writer assumes the readers respect/expect, that is some sort of unpretentious account, and, on the other hand, authenticity. In the case of the two female writers, both dimensions are dully fulfilled. Marianne Baillie explains in the Preface:

> It will be easily perceived that the Letters which compose this little Work, were not written with a view to publication; this, I am afraid, however, will not be considered an adequate excuse for the faults they will be found to possess; but it would be difficult now to alter their style, without impairing their interest; and I offer them, therefore, as they are. (vol. I, v)

In *The Young Travellers*, there is also a preface in which Ancram states:

> Lord Orford has said, "Why should we not write what we see: the simple narrative of facts has often more interest than the most elaborate fiction." A belief in the truth of this observation has induced me to present to the public, "The Young Travellers in Portugal." I visited that country in the interval between its recovered independence, and the return of its sovereign, John

> the Sixth. (…) A variety of commotions have, since that period, agitated Portugal, without, however, essentially changing the genius of the people, or their government. I have had, therefore, nothing to alter of the personal observations I then made. (iii)[3]

Having established a rapport with the reader, the travel writer must nevertheless adhere to other basic and overriding conventions that help to define the genre, which is to say to instruct, to entertain, and to comfort.

In the case of women, there were other limitations as already suggested. The 'scientific' or authoritative subjects, meaning anything that would go beyond the feminine sphere – this usually being related to a concern with relationships, domestic description and a concern with Christianity and morality – was *a priori* out of their reach. Thus, women were put in an ambiguous and precarious position when they decided to publish about their travels. In other words, since they were expected to avoid some subjects, then they were the object of severe criticism whenever they engaged in areas viewed as belonging within the male sphere, as Mary Sue Morrill argues:

> Women who write of their travels between 1795 and 1825 tend to limit bookish information and to focus more steadily than men on their personal experiences. A lady could not be expected to understand matters like business or government anyway, and, should she forget this axiom, every critic who reviewed her book would find a way to remind her. (339)

Even so, in the two cases under scrutiny, both authors do engage themselves into forbidden territory, and this is done almost immediately in the prefaces. Baillie, for instance, states:

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3. According to the subtitle, Ancram was in Portugal for three years. Since D. João VI returned from Brazil in July 1821 one can only assume that she was in Portugal from 1818-1819 to 1821. The above-mentioned 'independence' is rather obscure but the authoress may be referring to the formal acclamation of D. João as king in February 1818.

> To all who are interested in Portugueze [*sic*] history, (if their principles be those of justice and liberality) the conduct of the *constitutional* government during its brief reign must appear almost incredibly base and imbecile; never was opportunity so completely lost, or power more shamefully abused. Had the ministry been firm yet conciliating, rather than overbearing, tyrannical and perfidious; had they gradually introduced into their councils the respectable portion of the nobility, sustained the true dignity of their sovereign, and honoured religion in protecting the rights of the more virtuous part of their clergy; and finally, had they enacted a more moderate code of laws, it is probable that they would have been encouraged and assisted by other powers; but to every high minded principle they were utter strangers. (vol. I, x-xi)

In *The Young Travellers*, Ancram's remarks are no less authoritative:

> The evils that mar its delicious climate and its fine soil, may be comprised in a single truth; its government mistake cunning for wisdom.
>
> Deception, and low, paltry subterfuge, pervade all classes, and contribute its largest share to the degradation of the highest. *To seem, rather than to be*, is the unblazoned [*sic*] device on the shield of Portugal. (iv)

Though both authors avoid lengthy historical, statistical or otherwise dimensional aspects about Portugal, they do not avoid factual information even if this is intertwined with anecdotes, legends, some unconfirmed reports, and of course the comments about what they describe or narrate. Actually, the most successful travel writers were able to weave such information without harming the flow of the travelling experience. The main purpose was to entertain the readers who certainly wanted the experience to be an enjoyable one. Unlike instructive conventions, entertainment conventions offered narrators the opportunity to establish their own perspective and endeavour to move their readers emotionally by exploiting the public's apparently limitless curiosity for the exotic and the sensational.

On the one hand, this was the opportunity most writers had to engage in the description of natural scenes even if some narratives

contained illustrations, as is the case in both works under analysis. On the other hand, the passion for the sensational or the exotic was easily translated into a fascination with 'strange'/'different' or even morbid traditions. In this process, travellers also fulfilled the other above-mentioned convention – comforting readers. The travel experience could present the excitements of the new, the exotic, and the foreign but readers had to be reassured that home was still a better place in which to live. Direct or indirect comparisons between 'us' and 'them' was a widespread convention in travel narratives. Comparisons could take different forms but three types had special attention: natural landscape, politics, and religion.

The overwhelming majority of British travellers who came to Portugal were Anglicans/Protestants, and thus one of the main topics focused was Catholicism and the superstitious character of the Portuguese and this is the one main aspect which will be depicted in the two works under scrutiny. Although the ostensible purpose of travel is to learn of different ideas and customs, more often it allows travellers to corroborate or validate their own. Again, Baillie and Ancram do not differ from their male counterparts and predecessors.

In Baillie's case, and although at first she is aware of her position – "(…) with respect to religion, however, I shall not mention much which I have been told concerning it; for, being myself a Protestant, I may be suspected of prejudice in judging of an opposite persuasion." (vol. I, 78) – she nevertheless does not avoid a considerable amount of criticism about the role of the Catholic religion. There are many other occasions in which Baillie openly condemns the religious authorities, but, although long, the following is quite illustrative:

> An English lady (herself a liberal, though sincere Roman Catholic) had of late attempted to *reason* with some of the peasantry (whose milder dispositions allowed her to venture upon doing so, without risk of their resentment), and to point out to them the absurdity of their prayers when addressed to *saints* — (to have told them that such a practice was in reality *forbidden* by the Apostles in the Gospel, would have been fruitless; because the Scriptures, entire and unadulterated, are for ever concealed from their

> perusal, by the priests of their peculiar church!) — one of these rustics, in reply, expressed the universal sentiment prevalent among them, "It is proper and right, (said he,) to apply to the saints, when we want any thing; they are in favour with God, and can (if they are pleased with our offerings) obtain for us every good gift. With regard to addressing ourselves to God himself, that would be a very *unwise* method of proceeding; would any prudent person present a request to the king, when he knows that his ear is open only to the persuasions and representations of the fidalgos who surround him? now the saints are *God*'s fidalgos, and therefore we pray to *them*." What a blind and unworthy idea of the attributes of our Great Creator, must these poor people entertain! but we should not condemn them too severely; for the above instance proves, that at least the sin of *Pharisaical presumption* (too common with some Protestants) is not imputable to them! There is another superstition also, which deserves mention, relative to the *host*; when this sacred emblem is sent for, upon the summons of a sick person, divers prognostics are always formed, from the number of persons who voluntarily follow the procession to the door of the penitent; if *many* the person will recover; if *few* his illness will be of a very dangerous nature: but when the attendant priests *only* are seen, unaccompanied by any lay spectators, the event, it is infallibly pronounced, will be *fatal*! How horrible is the custom which universally prevails here, of suffering the street door to remain open, to the intrusion of every rude and careless observer; when beggars and children have frequently been known to penetrate unchidden, into the very chamber of the dying person, where they are allowed to stare upon the agonies of the sufferer, and to disturb the sacred grief of the surviving relatives! (vol. I, 91- 93)

In this instance, Baillie not only entertains the readers, since she shows the morbid, even if anecdotic Portuguese traditions regarding death and false devotion, but she also engenders pride in her Protestant readers and reasserts commonly held beliefs in the moral and theological degradation of Roman Catholicism. Furthermore, and although Baillie attenuates her discourse by introducing a short criticism of Protestantism, her introduction to the above examples is equally revelatory:

> I have lately heard several anecdotes of the past enormities of the priesthood in general, (and relating more particularly to the members of a certain rich and noble convent) which I shall not repeat; they may or may not be true, but at all events it is painful to contemplate human nature in such fearful colours as those to which they allude: one however, of a milder character, I will relate to you; for its simplicity well delineates the state of opinion among the common people, in respect to subjects connected with religion. (vol. I, 90)

In *The Young Travellers*, the criticism is again widespread, although, in this work, it comes under the guise of the instructive dimension, since often the negative opinions are uttered either by Mr. or Mrs. Grey in response to some inquiry or reaction from their children. The Portuguese are shown to be extremely superstitious and ignorant, albeit naïve, and thus prone to be exploited in their credulity by the religious authorities. Amongst others aspects, Ancram depicts the fact that the Portuguese do not have a direct access to the word of God because they do not have translations of the Bible. While in Évora, Sophia meets a bishop with whom she establishes a dialogue. The bishop, upon learning that Sophia reads the Bible, is extremely surprised and even disturbed, and comments: 'No lay person should read the Bible: it is only for the heads of the church. I, for example, am permitted to read it; but, I leave it to wiser heads even than mine: the traditions of the church are sufficient for me.' (249)

The contrast between the splendour in catholic churches and the state of ignorance of the people, as well as the adoration of saints' figures is felt as being particularly perplexing. Thus, when the Greys visit the Cork Convent, in Sintra, the description and the pedagogical dialogue are revealing:

> Dutch tiles, broken plates, and saucers, all surrounding a painted wooden figure of their patron saint, St. Francis, who reclines below, either dead or asleep, under a lattice-work of wood. Behind it were steps leading to the refectory; on the left-hand side, a cork door opening into the chapel; and on the right, a similar opening into a small oratory, in which

> was exhibited a wooden figure of our Saviour, bearing his cross. It is as large as life, half standing, half kneeling, as if worn down by the weight of it. Their catholic attendants pressed forward to do it homage, while the English travellers stood by; even Bertha making reflections on their extraordinary credulity. "Fashioned by man's hands," she said, "rude and disgusting as is its form, how can they worship it?" "My dear," said her father, "the foundation of their present superstition was laid centuries before they were born. (155-156)

On the whole, and just as Baillie had done, Ancram endorses the idea that Catholicism promotes and maintains the overriding ignorance of the Portuguese as well as false devotion. While in Mafra, the Greys attend mass, and after the description of what they observe, there is a revealing dialogue between Bertha and her mother, in which the latter tries to deconstruct the captivating impression the ceremony has left on Bertha:

> "My dear little girl, you have been describing the natural effects of an imposing ceremony, upon your unexperienced mind. But the impressions that you have now received, are not such as we go to the house of God to imbibe. Religion, besides the obedience it exacts to God's known commands, is the silent communing of the spirit with its Maker; the humble, earnest acknowledgment of innumerable failings; the fervent prayer for assistance, and for a blessing upon our own imperfect endeavours. (…) All such spectacles as we have just seen, appeal to the eye and the imagination; but the heart is seldom the better for them." (…) "And our Saviour himself nowhere enjoins the slightest external ceremony, or fast; but in many parts of the New Testament, we find his pointed disapprobation of those external forms to which the heart was a stranger. His religion was one of spirit and of truth; and as he knew men better than any one else, he probably foresaw that those external aids to worship, in which the ear and the eye were gratified, left the heart untouched; and it was to the heart and the understanding he addressed himself." (179-180)

The juxtaposition between Bertha's feelings and Mrs. Grey observations serves more than one purpose. Readers would have an insight into a different tradition, described in all its details, but they were also assured of the goodness and righteousness of their own home traditions. In short, even if there is an attempt at objectively describing a Catholic mass there is also the reinforcement of the Church of England beliefs.

Many more examples could be used to show how both authors do not distance themselves from their male predecessors, even in other areas not so prone to prejudiced views such as religion was. They use different narrative strategies which result from the kind of reader they wanted to attract, and also from the limitations already referred to. Baillie was certainly addressing the public in general, and institutes herself as the centre of her narrative and thus, as a narrator, she is also contrasted to the Portuguese as a whole. Therefore, the Portuguese (the lower classes) are characterized as simple, gullible people, as in many colonial texts. This allows her to draw attention to herself while at the same time pretending that, as a woman, she has not the authority or the power to write about subjects which were regarded as belonging within the male sphere. But, whenever she does write about those subjects she is perhaps (un)intentionally showing herself to be of the same status as male travellers.

Ancram had in mind a more restricted audience, the young reader, and consequently hides herself behind the different family characters. Although this narrative strategy could entail a mixture of views and opinions which could produce a less preconceived idea of the Portuguese, nevertheless the prevailing ideas are the ones expressed by the parents. In fact, the children (particularly Bertha) present their views/questions in a rather 'innocent' or naïve way, one that suggests a closer understanding of the foreign, only to be 'taught' by their parents of the real western civilization and objectivity – the British one. Again, the Portuguese are characterised as simple, uneducated and child-like people, and thus the colonial discourse is also present. In the end, both authors do not commend Portugal and the Portuguese in any way that might suggest a better understanding of the foreign.

The end of any travel narrative, like the prefatory greetings mentioned earlier, was also highly formulaic. Often the closing words reiterated intentions set forth in the introductory remarks, and writers deliberately reassumed their humble, honest, and friendly demeanour. Accordingly, both authors leave Portugal with warming feelings but these have to be regarded as conventional and rather paradoxical if one has in mind the overall content of their books:

> (…) When the distance from the shore increased, and they were about to enter the wide world of waters, their farewell gaze to the shore of Portugal was dimmed by tears. (*Portugal*, 275)

> "I shall never see another sun rise upon this romantic land" was my silent thought, and I looked back upon Lisbon almost with regret! (…) though I am returning to the country of my first and best affections, I cannot as yet shake off my dejection, nor "tune my soul to joy." Fair Portugal, adieu! Whatever may be thine imperfections, peace be with thee! Nor shall I ever cease to remember thee in the spirit of a thousand *saudades!* (*Lisbon* vol. II, 250)

Forms and conventions prevalent in nineteenth-century travel books reveal more about the expectations of readers than indeed about the experience of travel. In the case of women, they were encouraged to consider relationships and interest in other people important, since these traits defined them as 'feminine' women. These very same traits would include them in what Erik Cohen terms as the "experiential tourists", those who seek in travelling different experiences foreign to their own. (186-187)

The distinction between a 'traveller' and a 'tourist' has been the object of a very long controversy. The generalized idea that 'tourists' only appeared after the massification of travel, thus making a distinction that regards the tourist as someone who travels only for pleasure while the 'real traveller' is mainly interested in authentic experiences can be misleading and limited. It does not take into account that both the tourist or the traveller move beyond their own home landscape and culture (their 'life-space') and that that experience of

moving "assumes that there is some experience available 'out there' which cannot be found within the life-space, and which makes travel worthwhile." (Cohen, 182)

Travelling, whatever its motivation, always implies the existence of what Mary Louise Pratt coined as 'contact zone', to refer to "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and often grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination." (4) The traveller writer after the act of going into another place returns to his/her life-space and has to account for his/her travelling experience, one that often contains the assumption that something intrinsically and invariable positive was achieved and this can have ambiguous consequences.

Thus, no matter the intention or the comprehension of the traveller in both travel narratives, since there are several instances in which the female authors concentrated on the Other, foregrounding their individuality rather than membership in another nation, nevertheless they were not able to free themselves from preconceived views. Often those situations put them at the centre of the foreigner's attention and therefore it was the Self that was emphasized and not the Other. In the end, even if both Baillie and Ancram do not engage in an obvious colonial/imperial position, that is one that regarded as a moral and religious duty to bring civilization to places of the world which seemed 'primitive', (Mills, 97) they were after all members of their own country's culture and their writings were as much influenced by it as their male counterparts.

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